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CYNTHIA OZICK

THE SODOMY RULING
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PLUS: THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE AFRICA

THE NEW REPUBLIC
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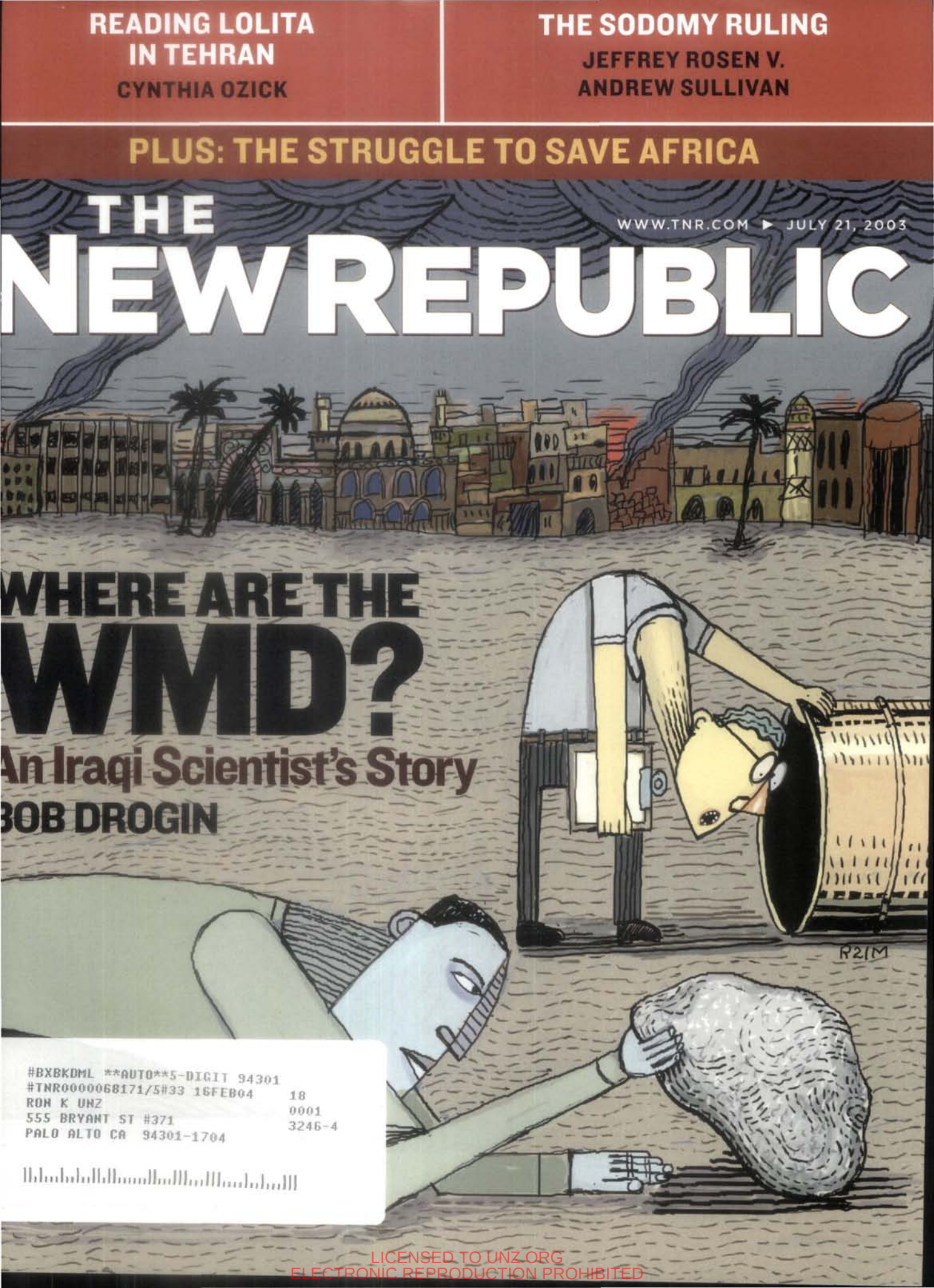
WHERE ARE THE WMD?

An Iraqi Scientist's Story

BOB DROGIN



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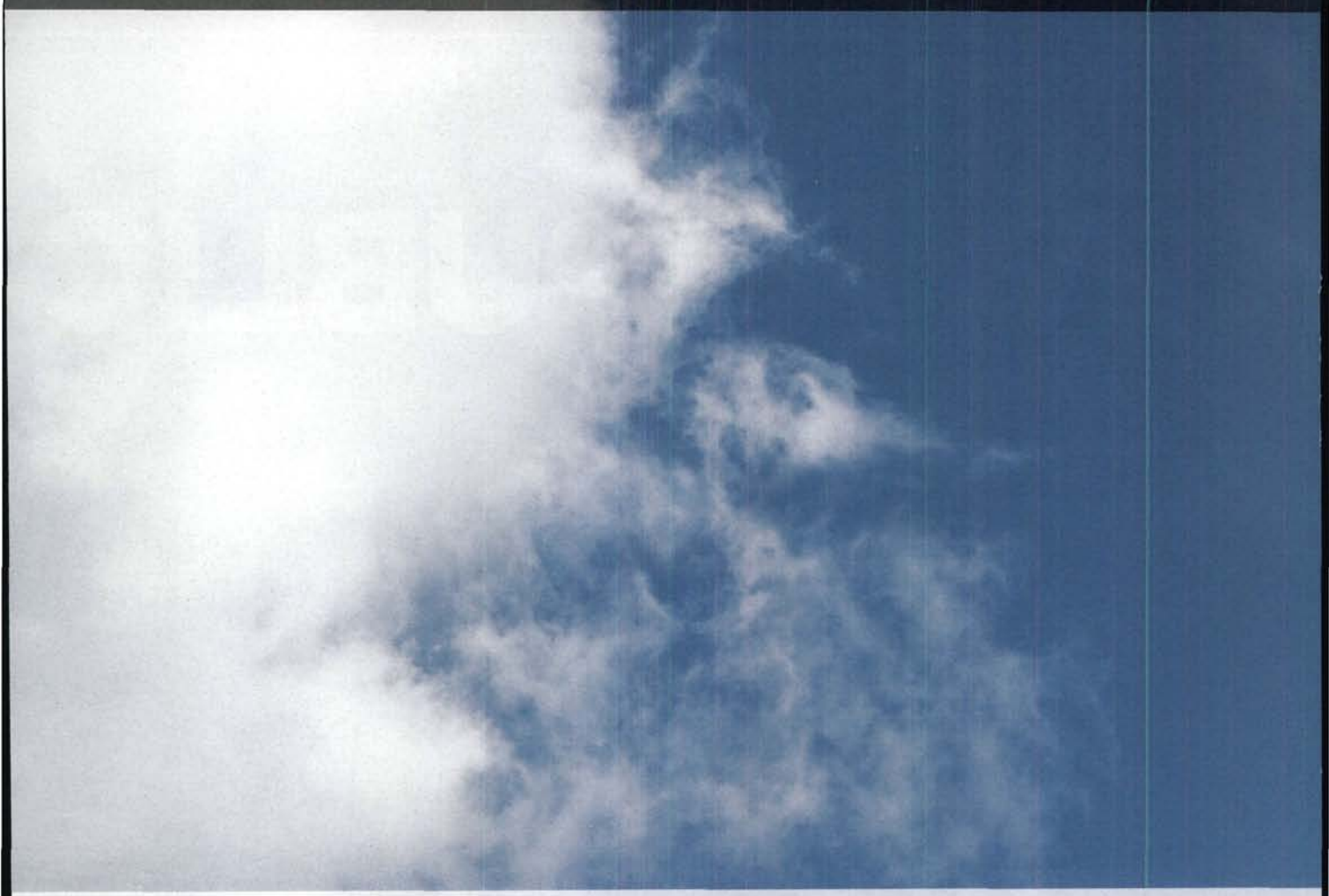

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CORRESPONDENCE

IMPERIAL NATURE

JOHN B. JUDIS REPEATS THE FAIRY-tale version of Woodrow Wilson's idealism, internationalism, and anti-imperialism ("History Lesson," June 9). The reality is far more troubling. The key to Wilson's life was his boyhood in Civil War Georgia. He saw white people slaughtering each other when, in his view, they should have been joining forces to oppress blacks, and he dedicated much of his life to bringing about white hegemony.

Immediately after becoming president, Wilson instituted Jim Crow laws in the federal government, firing African Americans from responsible positions and segregating the rest. Wilson's foreign policy reflected a similar desire to put nonwhites in their place, with interventions in Mexico (1913–1916), Haiti (1915), the Dominican Republic (1916), and Cuba (1917). This contrasted with his sympathy for the new white nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe that broke away from the old multinational empires, where Wilson saw parallels to white Southerners' quests for self-determination. Wilson's repeated failures in Mexico may have caused him to eventually back off intervention in that country, as Judis suggests, but this was hardly a matter of principle.

Today, politicians of both the neo–Theodore Roosevelt and neo-Wilsonian persuasions often lack a commitment to Third World democracy. And both often have a commitment to one-sided trade that benefits Western special interests while beggaring the Third World—witness the outrageous agricultural subsidies (a constant of left- and right-wing regimes in the United States, Europe, and Japan) that prevent African farmers from exporting their way to prosperity. Wilson's legacy lives on—just not quite the way that Judis describes it.

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JUDIS HAS PRESENTED AN INTERESTing but misguided case for Wilsonian internationalism. U.S. "imperialism" is a direct result of European folly. At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States was a benign and dormant power. But, against its judgment, it was dragged into two European wars (the first of which hardly mattered to this country). Thereafter, it was called upon by the Free World to contain, if not to roll back, Soviet communism, which Europe could not or would not do by itself. With that history, is it any wonder that American power brokers should say, "Enough is enough? We'll clean up this mess before we are dragged into Europe's old illusions and problems once again"? Wilson was discredited for very good reasons; let's move on.

J.H. COHEN, J.D., PH.D.
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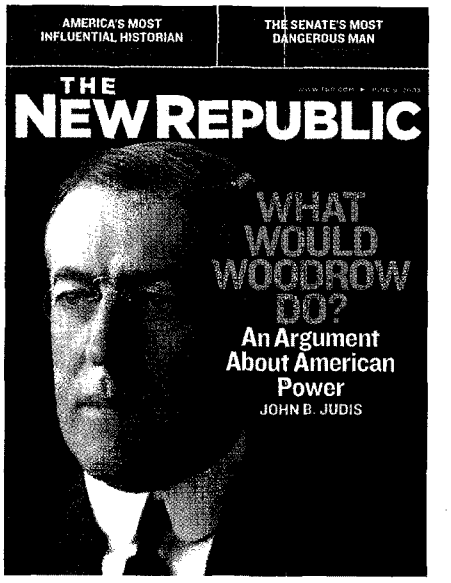
CRUDE AWAKENING

IN DESCRIBING THE THREAT OF IRAN'S nuclear power program, Lawrence F. Kaplan makes the assertion that a country with such significant oil and gas resources cannot possibly have a need for nuclear power ("Iranamok," June 9). That argument ignores the global nature of energy markets. While the government of Iran cannot claim that it needs nuclear power in order to maintain domestic energy security, they could have an economic argument. There is a world market for Iran's crude oil and a regional market for Iran's natural gas. The Iranian government should compare the income it receives by exporting its oil and gas with the cost of producing nuclear power. The operating costs of a nuclear power plant are quite low. The government could conclude that it is better off producing nuclear power and exporting more oil and gas, an important source of foreign currency. The world supply and demand for oil and gas routinely result in resources flowing in directions that seem inconsistent when viewed through the lens of energy security. For example, the United States, the world's largest oil importer, exports oil from Alaska to Asia. Iran's motives for developing nuclear power should be scrutinized, but its oil and gas reserves are not what damns it.

ANDREW CAMPBELL
New York, New York


AMERICA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL HISTORIAN
THE SENATE'S MOST DANGEROUS MAN
THE NEW REPUBLIC
WHAT WOULD WOODROW DO?
An Argument About American Power
JOHN B. JUDIS

MARKED TERRITORY

PETER BEINART QUOTES ISRAELI Prime Minister Ariel Sharon assuring a lawmaker from the settlement of Ariel, "You can build [there] for your children and grandchildren, and I hope even for your great-grandchildren." Beinart points out that "Ariel sits well inside the West Bank," suggesting that Sharon's statements might contradict his desire for peace ("Empty Cabinet," June 16). However, even under the Clinton plan—in which Israel would have relinquished more than 95 percent of the West Bank—Ariel, which has nearly 20,000 residents, would have been annexed to Israel as part of the Western Samaria settlement bloc. Therefore, Sharon's comments about Ariel should certainly not be seen as contradicting his support for territorial compromise for real peace.

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Kurt M. Landgraf,
President & CEO of
Educational Testing Service

"...we must lower the ladder of access to higher education and raise the level of financial assistance..."

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Higher Education An American Value

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions regarding affirmative action reconfirmed the principle that access to higher education is a fundamental American value. The critical role played by higher education in America was underscored, as well, in a new study commissioned by ETS.

The study found that for Americans, the primary concerns about higher education center on access and affordability. The public believes that we must lower the ladder of access to higher education and raise the level of financial assistance so that young people, from all backgrounds, have the chance to go to college.

These findings are among the many revealed in *Quality, Affordability, and Access: Americans Speak on Higher Education*, a recent public opinion poll conducted by pollsters Peter Hart and Robert Teeter. This third annual poll commissioned by ETS reveals Americans' attitudes about education and reform, both in K-12 and higher education. Researchers surveyed adults in general, administrators and professors, students, and business leaders.

Higher education remains the jewel in the crown of American education, according to those we polled. But our survey shows that most Americans believe many young people are missing their chance to attend college because of high tuition costs.

Other important findings from the May survey:

Education remains a national priority — During these times of uncertainty, education remains at the top of the American agenda. While higher education receives high praise and is placed on the public's honor roll, the K-12 system receives no better than a C average. The public wants an education system that works, and is willing to fund reforms that will lead to changes.

There is an information gap about education reform — Only 3 in 8 Americans are aware that a national K-12 education reform bill was signed into law, and only 1 in 8 believes that the legislation has led to real change in schools. There is a continuing need to communicate the full story about standards-based reform and the changes taking place in schools, districts and states across the U.S.

The bar should be raised — While Americans are pleased with the academic rigor of higher education, the public expects more from the nation's K-12 education system. Pushing students through the system is not enough; students must graduate equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for higher education and/or the workforce.

ETS, with its rich heritage of higher education assessment, is now becoming a major player in the K-12 arena and a dependable education resource to parents, politicians and policymakers. Our goal is clear and firm: Improve the way teachers teach and students learn. We will do so by *listening* to the American public, by *learning* from what we hear and what we discover through our research, and, with the help of those who care deeply about education, by *leading* the way.

We invite you to continue this dialogue by sharing your thoughts and questions at www.ets.org/testing or by mail.

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No Answer

TRB
FROM WASHINGTON

FOR AN ARTICLE last week on Salon.com, Laura McClure did something mischievous: She called the leaders of International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) and asked why they don't care about Congo. ANSWER, you may remember, coordinated this winter's protests against the Iraq war. But its agenda is far broader than that. As the preeminent umbrella organization of the hard left, ANSWER directs its outrage across the globe. This September, for instance, it plans "International Days of Protest against Occupation and Empire, from Palestine to Iraq to the Philippines to Cuba and Everywhere."

But, as McClure found out, "everywhere" does not include Congo. In fact, it doesn't include Africa at all. ANSWER has organized no protests and issued no statements on Africa's four most ravaged countries—Congo, Liberia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe—although they contain exponentially more oppression and suffering than the four targeted by the group's "International Days of Protest."

ANSWER is symptomatic of the left in general. A LexisNexis search going back to 2000 finds not a single reference to the crises in Congo, Liberia, Sudan, or Zimbabwe from Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Michael Moore, Michael Lerner, Gore Vidal, Cornel West, or Howard Zinn. In Congo alone, according to the International Rescue Committee, five years of civil war have taken the lives of a mind-boggling 3.3 million people. How can the leaders of the global left—men and women ostensibly dedicated to solidarity with the world's oppressed, impoverished masses—not care?

The answer, I think, is that the left isn't galvanized by victims; it's galvanized by victimizers. The theme of ANSWER's upcoming protest, after all, is "Occupation and Empire." In a recent essay, Roy explained that "the real and pressing danger, the *greatest threat of all,* is the locomotive force that drives the political and economic engine of the U.S. government." In other words, imperialism, what she elsewhere calls "a super-power's self-destructive impulse toward supremacy, stranglehold, global hegemony."

But, if the greatest injustice in the world is U.S. imperialism, the world's greatest injustices must be found where U.S. imperialism is strongest. And, here, Africa poses a problem. Africa, after all, has less contact with the United States than any other part of the world. The continent accounts for less than 1 percent of U.S. foreign investment, it receives less than 0.1 percent of U.S. military assistance, and it hosts no permanent American troop deployments. If you are a left-wing activist scouring the globe for places suffocating under America's "stranglehold," you'll pass right over sub-Saharan Africa. And, even if you do find U.S. imperialism in Africa, you'll find it in countries stable and prosperous enough to attract investment and cooperate against terrorism, not in the disaster zones of Congo, Liberia, Zimbabwe, and Sudan.

During the cold war, the left's preoccupation with U.S. empire didn't require it to so thoroughly ignore African suffering. In the 1970s and 1980s, fearful of growing Soviet influence on the continent, the United States enlisted dictators and would-be dictators—such as Liberia's Samuel Doe, Somalia's Mohammed Siad Barre, Congo's Mobutu Sese Seko, and Angola's Jonas Savimbi—as clients. The left rightly saw U.S. support as critical to the tyranny and war that blighted so many African lives (even if it turned a blind eye to similar tyranny among Soviet-backed leaders, such as Ethiopia's Mengistu Haile Meriam).

But, when the USSR withdrew from Africa in the late '80s, so did the United States. In Somalia, Liberia, and Congo, U.S.-backed dictators quickly fell, but their would-be successors lacked the superpower backing to consolidate control. The result in all three countries has been Hobbesian civil war, sometimes drawing in neighboring governments and sowing devastation across whole regions.

The United States is not entirely blameless in this post-cold-war anarchy. It sells arms that sometimes find their way to blood-curdling militias. And it represents a market for the diamonds, copper, and coltan that these militias sell to fund their wars. But the United States is no longer a critical force in these countries' politics. The key players are the local warlords and regional power brokers who compete for power with minimal interference from the outside world—men such as Liberia's Charles Taylor, who has helped destabilize four West African states, and the leaders of Uganda, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe, who have plundered Congo and plunged it into civil war.

By any reasonable assessment, in fact, Africa's post-cold-war disaster zones suffer not from too much U.S. imperialism but from too little. In Rwanda, Congo, and Liberia, the United States stood back while feckless, under-equipped peacekeepers—mostly from the developing world—failed to stanch the bloodletting. Only when a former colonial power has stepped in, as Britain has in Sierra Leone, have large numbers of African lives been saved. Hopefully, the Bush administration will follow suit in Liberia. But, so far, the United States has avoided acting like an empire in post-cold-war Africa, and, thus, the hard left has found little cause for moral concern.

The irony is that, in paying attention to Africa only when the United States wields power there, the hard left is not that different from the right. Once Africa was no longer a site of superpower competition, conservatives largely lost interest as well. Even today, most conservatives (with some honorable exceptions) oppose a Liberia intervention, which they deem "foreign policy as social work." The right, which on Iraq and Cuba speaks in high moral tones, adopts a cold and narrow realism when it comes to Africa, where it blithely assumes (sometimes ignorantly—see Ryan Lizza, "Ace of Diamonds," page 14) the United States has no interests.

Only the much-maligned liberal media—for instance, ABC's "Nightline," which in September 2001 broadcast a stunning five-part series from Congo—and liberal groups, such as Human Rights Watch, have labored to keep Africa's crises in the spotlight. And it is primarily liberal internationalist voices, such as *The Washington Post* editorial page, which have pushed for intervention in Liberia and an intensified U.S. role in Congo. If Africa's suffering represents a challenge to the conscience of the world, it is clear who on the U.S. ideological spectrum is willing to face it and who would rather turn away.

PETER BEINART

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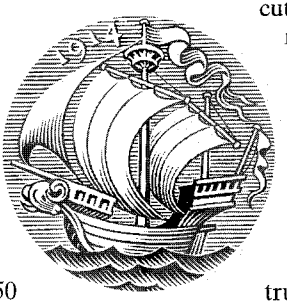
Talk Is Cheap

BEFORE EMBARKING ON his maiden presidential voyage to their homeland, George W. Bush gathered African journalists in the White House's Roosevelt Room and gave them a sermon on noblesse oblige. "We care deeply about the plight of the African citizen," he said. "When we see starvation, we don't turn our back, we act." Media reports have largely buttressed the president's generous self-assessment. Jamie Drummond, the executive director of DATA, a group that lobbies for African aid, credits Bush with the "beginnings of an historic change in policy toward Africa." *The New York Times*' Nicholas Kristof, normally an unstinting Bush critic, concedes that the administration's Africa agenda represents "an important step." And no less an authority than Irish rocker Bob Geldof, organizer of the 1985 Live Aid concert, has said, "You'll think I'm off my trolley when I say this, but the Bush administration is the most radical—in a positive sense—in its approach to Africa since Kennedy."

The problem isn't that these Africa-watchers are off their trolleys. It's that Bush has elevated his hollow notion of compassionate conservatism into foreign policy doctrine, and they've bought it. On the surface it's not hard to see why: Bush has proposed two striking new programs, which he has promoted as the essence of his Africa agenda. The first is a $15 billion initiative, unveiled in his last State of the Union address, to combat AIDS by flooding the continent with antiretroviral treatments and money for prevention programs. The other is a $10 billion program called the Millennium Challenge Account, which lets poor countries compete for grants from a new fund that supposedly eschews the inefficiencies that have plagued past development efforts.

But, while these public promises are indeed stirring, Bush has already started reneging on them. Although initially the administration strongly implied that it would spend $3 billion per year over five years for the AIDS initiative, the White House's 2004 budget request inexplicably asked Congress for only $1.9 billion. And that request is even more disappointing upon closer examination. When he rolled out the initiative in January, Bush had promised it would include $1 billion for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, widely celebrated as one of the most effective AIDS programs in Africa. But Bush's budget proposes a mere $200 million donation to the fund. That's $150 million less than the administration gave last year when it didn't have a shiny new AIDS program to sell. (And, because of a congressional mandate, even that money won't materialize unless European countries agree to provide the international fund with double the U.S. contribution.)



The same yawning chasm between rhetoric and budgetary reality appears likely to swallow the Millennium Challenge Account. The Bush administration has requested a mere $1.3 billion in its 2004 budget—not very encouraging given its promise to endow the account with $10 billion over three years. And, as these two programs wind their way through the appropriations process, most congressional observers assume they'll be shredded even further.

It gets worse. A lot of the money for the AIDS initiative seems likely to come from cutting other spending on African public health, such as the Global Fund. The U.S. Agency for International Development's spending on infectious-disease programs, for example, a large chunk of which is directed to Africa, will decrease 32 percent from last year; its child survival and maternal health efforts will take a 12 percent hit. One could argue that the overwhelming AIDS pandemic, with its 29 million African HIV sufferers, requires a reprioritization of public health resources. But that's very different from quietly gliding money from one little-known but effective program into another more media-friendly one. What's more, weakening Africa's public health infrastructure with all these little cuts will ultimately wound many of the same clinics where we want to distribute the antiretrovirals Bush has promised.

We wish we could say we are surprised. On education and his faith-based anti-poverty agenda, Bush has also trumpeted his concern for the poor—and then quietly left them in the lurch by massively underfunding his much-ballyhooed initiatives. Now the Bush administration has taken compassionate conservatism overseas, with much the same results. Except that, in Africa, the consequences will be even more grave. And, thus, the president's behavior is that much more shameful. ■

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NOTEBOOK

Robertson Cozies Up ... Lieberman Backs Down

TAYLOR-MADE

There aren't many prominent Americans willing to speak up for Charles Taylor, whose rise to power and subsequent rule have ravaged Liberia and destabilized large chunks of West Africa. But Pat Robertson has never followed the herd. In recent weeks, the TV preacher has attacked the Bush administration for undermining Taylor's government. "This country [Liberia] has had a close relationship with the United States over the years, but, of late, the last, oh, four, five, six years, the United States State Department has tried as hard as it can to destabilize Liberia and to bring about the very outcome we're seeing now," Robertson complained on the June 26 broadcast of "The 700 Club," according to the group Americans United for Separation of Church and State. A few days later, Robertson told his viewers that Bush officials "haven't had an endgame, all they've wanted to do is destroy the government of Liberia, which they have succeeded in doing." A few days after that, Robertson described Taylor as "a Christian, Baptist president" whom the United States has no business forcing from power.

But at no time during his pronouncements on Taylor's behalf did Robertson mention this one salient fact: Taylor is Robertson's business partner. In 1999, a Robertson-owned company called Freedom Gold struck a deal with Taylor's regime, which, in exchange for a 10 percent equity interest, allows it to mine for gold in southeastern Liberia. And now, if Taylor goes, so presumably does Robertson's gold mine. Taylor, for his part, seems to appreciate Robertson. Last year, at a three-day "Liberia for Jesus" rally, which a Robertson-supported preacher named John Gimenez helped organize, Taylor presented Gimenez with a ceremonial plate. "Thank you," Taylor said. "Tell Pat Robertson, and please present this to him as a token of our appreciation." Now, it seems,

Charles Taylor

Robertson is showing his appreciation back.

PAST IMPERFECT

Robertson isn't the only public figure who's been less than forthcoming about his history with Taylor. Now that the U.S. media has decided to pay attention to Taylor's despotic reign, it has a sudden need for commentators with African expertise. And no experts have been in heavier rotation than two former assistant secretaries of state for African affairs, Susan Rice and Herman Cohen, who have recently been voicing their opinions on the crisis in Liberia to a host of media outlets.

Appearing on CNN this week, Rice, who served as assistant secretary from 1997 to 2001, argued, "I think we have to be somewhat skeptical of Charles Taylor's motives when he says he's concerned about the people of Liberia. He hasn't been for his entire tenure." Which, of course, is true. But it's a strange point for Rice to be making, since, as the Clinton administration's point person on Africa, she played a key role in America's efforts to "mainstream" Taylor, who, after leading a brutal, seven-year insurrection, was "elected" Liberia's president in 1997. During Rice's tenure, the State Department requested that Massachusetts drop criminal charges against Taylor stemming from his 1985 escape from a prison there. And, in 1999, it pressed Sierra Leone's democratically elected government to sign a peace accord, which Rice praised, with the despicable Taylor-backed rebel group the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)—an agreement that made RUF leader and Taylor ally Foday Sankoh Sierra Leone's vice president.

Then there's Cohen, who served as assistant secretary from 1989 to 1993. Speaking over the weekend on National Public Radio, Cohen recited the brief against Taylor: "He's running a criminal syndicate there: timber, diamonds. He hasn't done a single thing for the people. If he doesn't physically leave the country, he must at least resign from the presidency." Again, it's not the sentiments that raise eyebrows, it's the spokesman. As a member of the first Bush administration, Cohen was a party to America's failure to intervene against the then-rebel leader Taylor, who was on the verge of capturing Liberia's capital, Monrovia, in 1990. (As Cohen later admitted, "A modest U.S. intervention at that point to end the fighting in Monrovia could have avoided the prolonged conflict.") Even worse was what he did after he left government: In 1999, his lobbying firm, Cohen and Woods International (CWI), signed a $300,000 contract with Taylor's government—what Cohen now calls a "criminal syndicate"—to help it in "overcoming obstacles to a constructive relationship" with the United States. CWI later ended its relationship with the Liberian gov-

David Cowles

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ernment when it failed to pay its bills, which gives an odd resonance to something else the former assistant secretary told NPR: "Charles Taylor has a history of going back on his word. He consistently accepts agreements and then finds a way to wiggle out of it." Herman Cohen should know.

SAY IT AIN'T SO

BUT AT LEAST RICE AND COHEN are pushing the right prescription now. One American presidential hopeful, however, is apparently intent on perpetuating America's mistakes in Liberia. And it's not who you'd expect. At a Fourth of July campaign stop in New Hampshire, Joe Lieberman was asked whether he supported sending troops to Liberia—a stand that even the dovish Howard Dean is promoting. Despite a tenuous cease-fire that had held for a week as Washington mulled intervention, Lieberman questioned whether the country was "ready for peacekeeping." He concluded, "I don't think it's appropriate for American soldiers to get into the middle of that." Lieberman's staff later tried to clarify, saying the candidate believes American troops should participate in an international peacekeeping force once Taylor has left the country and "the recent cease-fire [has been] implemented and a new government installed." But those criteria set the bar for intervention impossibly high. Lieberman won't support peacekeepers until a new government is installed. But, without peacekeepers, the only way a new government will come about is through a pitched battle for Monrovia in which thousands could die. And it may not be a government worth protecting.

Lieberman's stance is all the more confusing because it dramatically undermines his hallmark foreign policy approach of fusing morality with geopolitics. Recall that, in 1995, while defending the Clinton administration's decision to send troops to Bosnia, Lieberman argued on CNN, "We're stepping in to enforce a peace that the three parties have agreed to and asked us to come in to do. I think, if we don't do it, American leadership is drastically undercut in the world, and, ultimately, that hurts every individual American." He later went further, commenting in 1999 on East Timor, which is certainly more peripheral to U.S. interests than Liberia, "When we are presented with a humanitarian crisis, we cannot sit back like some immense couch potato." And, lest we forget, Lieberman argued the moral case against Saddam Hussein for more than a decade and with more passion than almost anyone. On the stump, Lieberman constantly tells voters the only viable candidate for president will be someone "who will know when to use diplomacy . . . but also know when to use our power." Perhaps he was referring to Dean. ■

Inside the Box | Bruce Reed

THROWN TO THE LIONS
Bush isn't worried that saying "bring 'em on" will inspire further attacks against American soldiers: "I saw *Gladiator*—that's how emperors are supposed to talk."

LOOK BOTH WAYS
Bush hasn't made up his mind on constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. Ari: "He wants to preserve the sacred bond between a president and his pollster."

BIG MUDDY Rumsfeld says Iraq is not a quagmire: "This isn't the first time this president has had to avoid Vietnam."

THE RACK Administration says it won't use terrorism as excuse to torture suspects. Rove: "We prefer using it to torture Democrats."

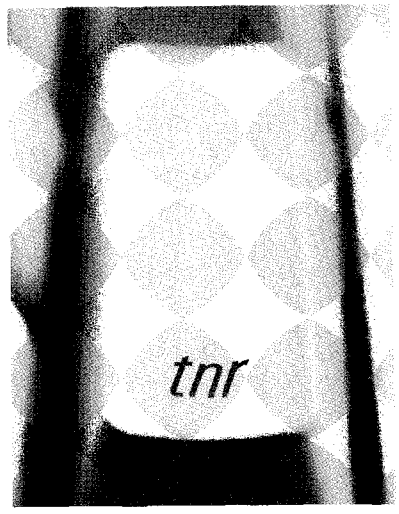
I ONLY WORK HERE Unemployment soars to nine-year high. Bush defense: "Don't blame me—I'd never have lost those jobs if Clinton hadn't helped create them."

MADMEN Dean finishes first in MoveOn.org primary. Democratic activists: "At last, a candidate who can capture the Angry White Yale vote!"

DECREASING RETURNS New OMB Director Bolten tells Congress that Bush has no plans to push for new tax cuts: "We just want to make the existing tax cuts retroactive to 1913."

ONCE MORE WITH FEELING
Scientists develop way to enhance the human body's ability to feel. Cheney: "They'll make a compassionate conservative of me yet!"

RUMSFELD, DEAN: GETTY



Hot Button Issues

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Bunia Dispatch

Broken Record

BY CARTER DOUGHERTY

On June 10, a French rapid-reaction force with a charge from the U.N. Security Council landed in Bunia. And, in Ituri, the lawless, war-torn province of eastern Congo that encompasses Bunia city, their impact was felt right away. After a French deadline for all armed militia groups to leave Bunia passed, the foreign soldiers cracked down. They began searching people entering town, even using metal detectors to find Kalashnikovs hidden in sacks of potatoes. While securing the area around one checkpoint, the French searched nearby houses and found five rifles. In a flash, the owners of the rifles were face down in the dirt, immobilized in white plastic handcuffs.

Only a month earlier, Bunia had been a war zone. Child soldiers high on drugs roamed its streets. Bloated corpses littered the central market. The French intervention, which allows the soldiers to use more force than the previous U.N. peacekeeping contingent, was supposed to change that. And, at moments like the rifle seizure, it seemed possible the brutal violence in Ituri Province—where power is distributed among a half-dozen armed groups—might end with tough love from well-intentioned Europeans.

Unfortunately, the U.N. Bunia plan being carried out by the French treads a path that the organization has followed for years—one destined for failure. First, the United Nations responds to a conflict with inadequate resources. Then, it limits the scope of its mission, making it more difficult to create a lasting peace. Finally, even as violence continues, it inaugurates a program for long-term political development under false pretenses, which only exacerbates the conflict.

The U.N.'s mistakes had already begun by the time the French arrived. Though the war in eastern Congo has many causes—not least Ituri's rich gold deposits—the struggle in this region essentially pits the ethnic minority, Hema, against the majority, Lendu. Lendu militias massacred Hema when they seized Bunia on May 6, and Hema militias returned the favor when they recaptured the dusty town on May 12. After each battle, gunmen combed through houses and executed civilians in a process the Congolese call *le nettoyage*—French for "cleaning." Yet, even as the killing orgy commenced, the United Nations did little. The Security Council had turned a blind eye to previous massacres in eastern Congo, notably in the city of Kisangani in 2002, and in May of this year it took no immediate action as well. The few Uruguayan U.N. forces in Bunia before the French arrived, remnants of a previous limited mission in Congo, had no authority to intervene. The U.N. headquarters in Bunia even came under siege by a Lendu militia on May 8, but the Uruguayans, outnumbered, could do little more than fire into the air to try and beat back the invaders. The Uruguayans could offer no protection to civilians fleeing the militia, since their mission, approved by the Security Council, was operating under Chapter 6 of the U.N. Charter, which calls such missions "peacekeeping." This term presumes there is a peace to keep—an absurd idea, given Hema and Lendu were slaughtering each other—and prevents U.N. forces from forcibly imposing calm.

Finally, fearing that the back-and-forth violence in Ituri would get worse, in late May U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked member countries to volunteer for a more robust Congo mission. The French agreed to go in until September 1, provided their troops fell under Chapter 7, a provision widely known as "peace enforcement," a seemingly tougher mandate that allows foreign troops to use force to prevent ethnic cleansing. By the middle of June, the French began using this authority to kick the gun-toting toughs who had made life hell for civilians in Bunia out of town and to seize weapons at checkpoints at town borders. By late June, most of the Hema militia, the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC), had left the city limits.

But they will come back, since the supposedly tougher French mission is actually toothless in some respects. While they were loading a Toyota Land Cruiser with Kalashnikovs and driving out of Bunia, I asked one of the UPC members what they would do when the French leave. "What are we going to do after September 1?" he asked. "We are going to come right back into Bunia." And they will return with their guns. Demilitarizing the town, as the French have done, is not the same as disarming the militias. Under the current Bunia mission's directives, as long as they don't point their guns at anyone, the UPC and other militias are free to keep them. Indeed, the French commander, Brigadier General Jean-Paul Thonier, has made clear that his mission does not include disarmament. The problem, Western diplomats told me, is that the French-led force—now just more than 1,100—is not large enough to disarm the militias. The French are reluctant to add more troops, given that they are also policing a cease-fire in the Ivory Coast, and the United Nations has not authorized more foreign soldiers. So the French forces in Bunia have settled on a job they can accomplish.

The small size of the French force has other repercussions: It limits the geographic scope of the mission, which also sets the stage for future conflict. Lotsove Veneranda, a 53-year-old farmer, calmly explained to me how Lendu militiamen blitzed her village at 4 a.m. one day last month and hacked to death the sick and elderly. Her village, Ka-

Carter Dougherty is a freelance journalist based in Rwanda.

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toto, lies twelve miles from Bunia—outside the French troops' mandate. And it's not alone. Katoto, Tchomia, Aveba, Nyoka, Mahagi, and other villages near Bunia have all been the subject of horrific violence since the French arrived: The expulsion of militiamen from the city limits has pushed them into these villages, where they pillage and murder, stoking tensions that could spark more violence. Indeed, the U.N. headquarters in Congo warned, in an official communication to New York in late May, that the French-led force could find itself "in the invidious position of maintaining a robust presence in only one part of a disaster zone." These fears have come to pass.

Even as the violence moves outside of town and the armed militias wait for their return to Bunia, U.N. officials are trying to create an embryonic provincial government that will find a negotiated solution to Bunia's problems. Colonel Gerard Dubois, the French spokesmen, never tires of telling journalists, "Securing Bunia is intended to allow a relaunch of the political process." Much of the political negotiating takes place in a former Greek restaurant called Hellenique. Here, Congolese drawn from Ituri's various ethnic communities and overseen by U.N. staffers have created an "interim administration" that is supposed to assume the normal functions of a city: police, judiciary, and so on. The interim administration has even created a founding document and official-looking stamps. The United Nations has plowed $300,000 into making the interim administration work, and it pays participants a per diem of $10 to keep at it.

This interim administration, however, rests on the ludicrous assumption that the militias accept it as the province's legitimate authority. Yet the leader of the UPC has promised to dissolve the interim government when the French leave and his forces return.

THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL will spend July debating what resources and mandate the new U.N. force will have in Bunia after September 1. The current plan is to send 3,800 Bangladeshis to succeed the French, with the same mandate. Given that the Bangladeshis are unlikely to be as proactive and well-trained as the French troops and that the same militiamen who murdered with impunity only months before the French arrived in Bunia are still lurking nearby, the hope for any resolution that protects innocent civilians seems grim.

Sooner or later—perhaps after another round of slaughter—the Security Council will have to consider authorizing a military contingent with the mandate, training, and resources to forcibly pacify the entire bloodstained province of Ituri. What's more, the Council will need to make a concerted effort to stem the flow of arms into the province, notably from Uganda and Rwanda, and then, once the UPC and other militias are pacified, to launch the kind of political process that now is impossible. Representatives from the Security Council visited Bunia in early June, so they know the facts on the ground. Now they have to act on them. ■

West Bank realities.

Pre-occupation

BY MARTIN PERETZ

ON AUGUST 6, 2002, Donald Rumsfeld had the temerity to call the West Bank and Gaza Strip "the so-called occupied territories." He couldn't have been more correct. The "occupied territories," after all, is shorthand for the idea that Israel has no rights—either legal or practical—to any of this inflamed real estate. Like the facile phrase "land for peace," it is meant to short-circuit a dense history and convince the world that the turmoil in the Middle East stems from Israel's unwillingness to return the land it won from Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the Six Day War, a war imposed on it by Cairo and Damascus with the connivance of Moscow. (Israel also won the Golan Heights in that war, but the demand for its return to Syria has quieted—at least temporarily—because, after September 11, 2001, it is hard to justify giving strategically crucial territory to a terrorist-supporting regime.) If only Israel devolved to the Palestinians what it won in June 1967 (the West Bank between the 1949 armistice lines and the Jordan river, plus the Gaza Strip), peace and justice would be restored to the Middle East.

But there was no peace in the Middle East before 1967. Indeed, there was great turmoil—directed at Israel. And there was no justice for the Arabs of Palestine. The 1947 U.N. partition plan had envisioned, along with the Jewish one, an Arab state: The word Palestine was hardly uttered. But, in the two decades before the 1967 war, Jordan (which had annexed the West Bank) and Egypt (which had run Gaza as a virtual penitentiary, no one in and no one out) instead ruled the territories for themselves. Palestinian nationalists during this time, according to the noted Binghamton University scholar Don Peretz (no relation of mine, familial or political), were "instruments of national policy of various Arab governments, ... of inter-Arab policy maneuvers." With the defeat of their Arab caretakers by Israel, however, young Palestinian commandos coalesced around an audacious goal: "to obliterate completely the Jewish state." Where did this élan come from? Peretz explains: "In the UNRWA schools, where refugee children were educated by Palestinian teachers, a new generation of ardent Palestinian patriots was raised. The most zealous proponent of militant activism against the 'intruder state' of Israel was this new generation of U.N.-educated youth." Israelis grasped the Palestinian goal of politicide toward the Jewish state, and their consciousness was reinforced by the second intifada, launched in September 2000 amidst un-

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precedented concessions from Jerusalem. Given that the end of the Jewish state remains the Palestinians' overriding desire, no Israeli government can trust in the irreversibility of Arab obligations taken at the negotiating table. Nonetheless, on certain matters, in the current talks brokered by the United States, this Israeli government has already taken that risk. It has released convicted terrorists from jail, some (if not most) ready again to plot and commit murder. Israel has also taken largely on faith the Palestinian Authority's (P.A.) commitment to put an end to the violence against Israelis perpetrated by both jihadist gangs, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and the P.A.'s own affiliated militias. The P.A., after all, has publicly refused to even try to confiscate the weaponry of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Instead, the road map gives them a three-month truce during which to rebuild the strength sapped by Israeli counterterrorism measures during the last year. Will those released terrorists be stopped from killing Israelis again? If the cease-fire Mahmoud Abbas has promised to sustain turns out to be just another calm before another storm, the road map will lead to nowhere.

BUT, WHILE PRISONERS can be rearrested and cease-fires ended, the territorial concessions Israel makes in a final agreement would have the aura and substance of permanence. Which is why Rumsfeld's phrase alarmed some and consoled others. The implications of Rumsfeld's construction could not have been more correct: From the perspective of international law, all the equities regarding the West Bank and Gaza accrue to Israel. Here the crux is the Mandate for Palestine confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922. To be sure, this document severed that part of Palestine on the eastern side of the Jordan from the land reserved for the Jewish people by the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and set in process Hashemite rule there. But, otherwise, the British were charged with facilitating the establishment of the Jewish national home. The mandate specifically provided for Jewish immigration and, perhaps most important to the current debate, guaranteed the right to "close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands." (By what right did the League so decide the destiny of this particular territory? The truth is that this is how the remains of all of the defeated Ottoman Empire, Turkey itself aside, were distributed.) One might say the U.N.'s 1947 partition plan for Palestine superseded the mandate. But the Arabs all rejected that plan. And no government other than Pakistan's and Great Britain's recognized Jordanian sovereignty in the West Bank. More to the point, Israel never ceded any of the rights granted to its legal predecessor, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, by the League, and such a relinquishing was not made a precondition of Israel's admission to the United Nations in 1949.

This is not a convoluted justification for Israeli settlements, some of which are highly provocative to the surrounding Palestinians and preclude the contiguity of a future Palestinian state. I was against these settlements when they were built (some by Labor governments), and I assume that, as part of a real peace agreement, many—perhaps most—of them will be disbanded. How should such decisions be made? Since it is assumed by nearly everybody that scrupulous attention will be paid to the religious sensibilities of the Arabs in the making of any final boundaries, like-minded care should also be paid to the comparable sensibilities of the Jews: Jews should have access to sites holy to them in the historic lands of Judea and Samaria. Another consideration will be the size of the different Jewish communities. As a general rule, fortunately, the larger they are, the closer they are to the 1949 lines. But not all; one community—Ariel—would have remained with Israel even under the Clinton rules.

The basic principle in such decisions will be Israel's security. Israel's precarious lines of defense need to be much stronger than they were before 1967, and the wall now being built to divide Israelis and Palestinians is part of that strategy. (The wall, by the way, was a wise contrivance not of Israel's hawks but of its doves.) The wall deviates from the pre-'67 borders, as it should. Those who object to these deviations see them as precedents for a future permanent border, which they are not. But what the critics do not grasp is that, in a serious negotiation, Israel's aims will actually be greater than the wall's reach. Israel will also be eager to transfer some of its territory within the green line—especially Arab neighborhoods around Jerusalem and Arab towns elsewhere in the country—to nascent Palestine. Then we will see how Palestinian these Arab citizens of Israel really feel.

One demand Israel will almost certainly make is for control over its border with Jordan. Not because King Abdullah (or his father, for that matter) seeks Israel's destruction. To the contrary, Israel rescued the Hashemites in 1970 by turning back columns of Syrian tanks that had invaded Jordan while the monarchy put down a Palestinian revolt instigated by Yasir Arafat. Rather, Jordan is a danger to Israel because of its weakness. The Jordanians were appalled when Ehud Barak seemed open, at Camp David and at Taba, to loosening Israel's hold on the then-emerging Palestinian state's border with the kingdom. The monarchy has good reason to fear the Palestinians west of the river and at home. Yes, recent elections in Jordan must have offered the king some comfort: Polling mechanisms that disenfranchised Jordan's Palestinians kept the opposition ultras from gaining too many seats. But the Muslim extremists and the outright jihadists in Jordan, as everywhere else in that part of the world, are growing in number and in ferocity. And the Palestinians, mostly descendants of émigrés from the other side of the river, constitute 60 percent of Jordan's population, maybe more. They resent the king for his fidelity to his father's peace with Israel. These two sources of opposition are volatile. If they rise, no one can guarantee the outcome. ■

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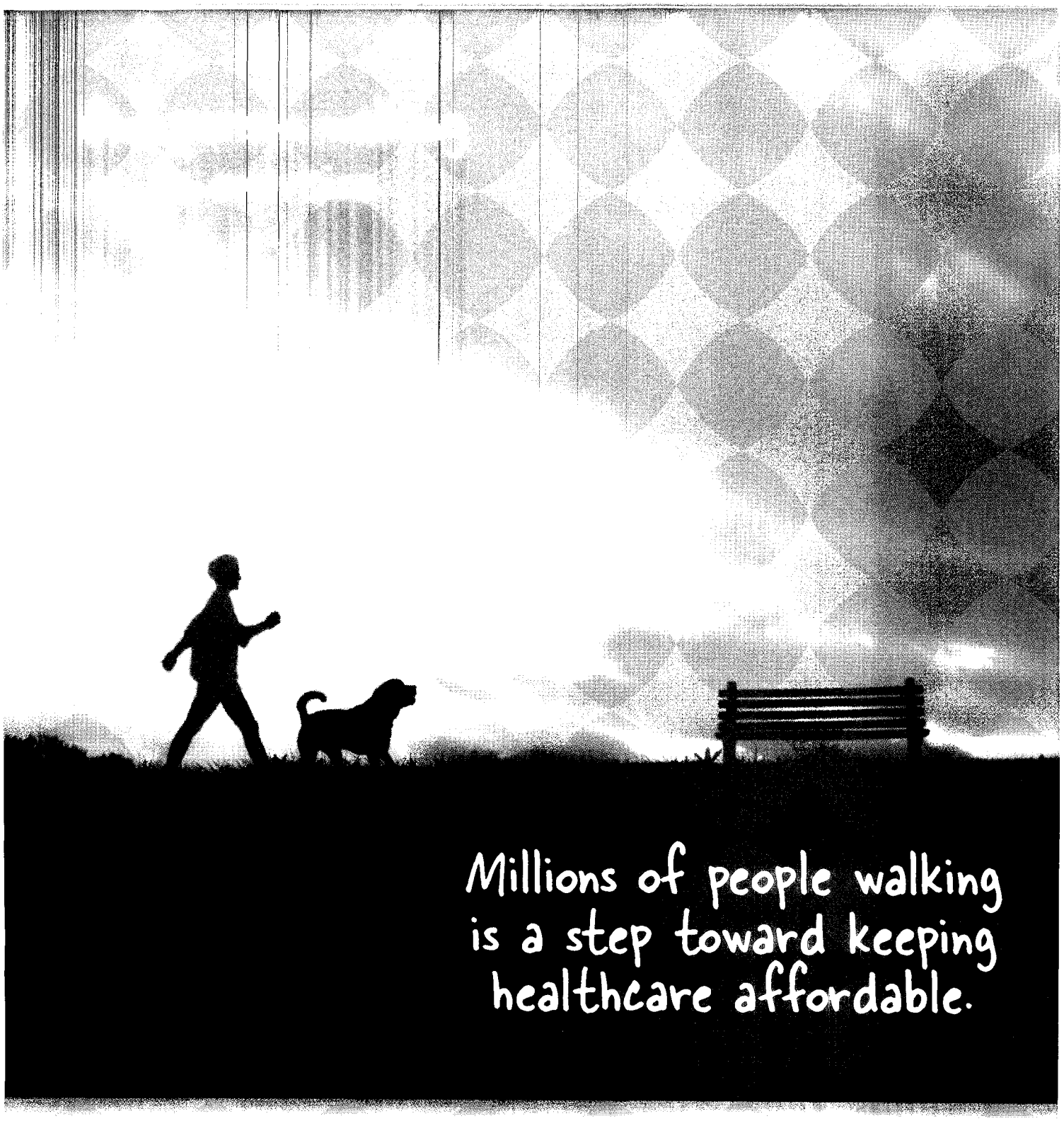

The illness and chronic disease resulting from inactive lifestyles cost as much as $76 billion a year to treat. That's why Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans across the nation are launching ***WalkingWorks***℠, an unprecedented effort to work with employers to help Americans add physical activity to their daily routines. It's one of the many ways we're doing our part to control rising healthcare costs. For more information, visit our web site at **www.bcbs.com**.

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Charles Taylor's terror ties.

Ace of Diamonds

BY RYAN LIZZA

NAME THE FOLLOWING despot: In 1991, he invaded a neighboring country, where his men committed wholesale looting and massive atrocities. In 1998, he personally met with a senior Al Qaeda operative now listed as one of the FBI's 25 "Most Wanted" terrorists. He is the single greatest threat to the stability of one of the most important oil-producing regions in the world. Saddam Hussein? No, Charles Taylor of Liberia.

If the Bush administration decides to send a peacekeeping force to Liberia, in other words, it will be safeguarding not only humanitarian concerns but national security ones as well. Yet, even as the Bush administration contemplates such a mission, it has failed to make this point, largely acceding to the conservative mantra that the United States has no strategic interests in the region.

They're wrong. Start with Al Qaeda. In September 1998, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, a top Al Qaeda operative, visited Liberia and met with Taylor and senior members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the vicious Taylor-controlled militia that invaded Sierra Leone in 1991 to take over the country's diamond mines. Abdullah trained Al Qaeda recruits in explosives in Afghanistan, participated in operations against Americans in Somalia, and helped plan the East African embassy bombings in 1998. The U.S. government currently offers a $25 million reward for information leading to his arrest. And Abdullah's meeting with Taylor was no social visit. Rather it led to a relationship in which Al Qaeda bought large quantities of diamonds from the RUF in exchange for weapons and cash. The operation, which peaked in the months before September 11, 2001, is believed to have offered Al Qaeda a way to convert its assets into a form that could be moved across borders more easily. The Taylor–Al Qaeda relationship has been carefully documented by *The Washington Post*'s Douglas Farah, by a yearlong European intelligence investigation, and, most recently, in a 100-page report the nongovernmental organization Global Witness released in April. Liberia's links to Al Qaeda, in other words, are far more well-documented than Iraq's. And, yet, they have never been cited by anyone in the Bush administration.

Then there's oil. Since 1989, when Taylor started Liberia's civil war, conflict has spread to neighboring Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. While all these states are west of the big oil-producing countries along the Gulf of Guinea—from which the United States projects it will receive some 20 percent of its oil imports in a few years—there are plausible scenarios under which the chaos could spread further. Nobody would have predicted that Taylor's original 1989 Christmas Eve insurrection would one day engulf Côte d'Ivoire, long a rock of stability in West Africa, but now it has. And, as *The Economist* pointed out this week, "if Côte d'Ivoire were to go the way of Liberia, it would cripple" Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, bringing the conflict to the doorstep of Nigeria, the already precarious oil-rich hegemon of the region.

BUT THE BUSH administration's failure to articulate the stakes in Liberia is not its only mistake. The recent focus on whether the United States will send troops has obscured the more important question: whether Taylor, the first sitting head of state since Slobodan Milosevic to be indicted for war crimes, will escape prosecution. While President Bush has called for Taylor to leave the country, he has said little about bringing him to trial for his more than a decade of mass murder. But West Africa will not breathe easily until Taylor is tried, convicted, and imprisoned.

Since Taylor and the RUF launched their civil war in Sierra Leone in 1991 and became internationally famous for hacking the limbs off their victims and forcing drug-addled child-conscripts to murder their parents, the United States has pursued two very different approaches toward them—one of engagement, amnesty, and appeasement and one of pressure and even prosecution. In 1999, the Clinton administration, at the behest of the State Department's African Affairs bureaucrats and Jesse Jackson (who had become a personal friend of Taylor's in his role as Bill Clinton's envoy to Africa), helped negotiate the disastrous Lomé Accord, which gave the RUF full amnesty for its crimes and installed Foday Sankoh, the RUF's monstrous leader, as vice president of Sierra Leone. As one American official told THE NEW REPUBLIC in 2000, "The message we sent with Lomé is that you can terrorize your way to power."

After the accord quickly fell apart (the RUF took hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers hostage, threatening to skin them alive), Britain sent troops into Sierra Leone to restore order and beat back the RUF. In the United States, the humiliated State Department diplomats behind Lomé were shoved aside by U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and other officials disgusted by Lomé's concessions. Holbrooke began referring to Taylor as "the Milosevic of Africa" and pushed successfully at the United Nations for the creation in August 2000 of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a tribunal to prosecute those most responsible for the war's atrocities. In 2002, after strenuous lobbying by the United States, Kofi Annan appointed American David Crane as the court's prosecutor. Crane, the first American prosecutor of an international court since Nuremberg, is a former judge advocate general for the U.S. Army who has done stints at the Defense Intelligence Agency and, most recently, as the Pentagon's inspector general. His staff is made up mostly of former officials from the military and nonprofits—"people with a results-oriented approach, used to working with lim-

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ited resources," as a former court official describes them. Which is lucky, because limited resources are exactly what they have. Crane arrived in Sierra Leone with no personnel, computers, or vehicles. Hot water is rare. Much of the court staff has malaria, several court informers have been murdered, and Crane—who lives in a room above the court itself—faces constant death threats.

Despite all this, Crane has indicted twelve of West Africa's worst war criminals in eleven months and has done it at a fraction of the cost of other international tribunals. Nine of the war criminals were successfully arrested in Sierra Leone this year without incident. One of the three others, Sam Bockarie, was recently murdered in Liberia by Taylor. (Just to be sure, Taylor also killed Bockarie's wife and children.) Another is thought to be in Liberia, and some reports suggest he, too, was recently killed. The final indicted war criminal, whom Crane has identified as "one of the individuals bearing the greatest responsibility" for a decade of atrocities, is Taylor himself.

But, even as the Special Court began indicting the region's worst criminals, the engagement track at the State Department got new life. Many of the same bureaucrats who fashioned Lomé and opposed the Special Court remain in place in the Bush administration. And their new boss, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner, has also taken a softer line. The Bush team did support a stringent sanctions regime against Taylor, but, as Liberia descended into another civil war over the last three years—this time with rebels threatening Taylor's own regime—the Bushies ratcheted down some of the pressure on Taylor, opting instead for negotiation. When asked by Senator Russ Feingold about Taylor's Al Qaeda ties in June 2002, for example, Kansteiner downplayed them. More recently, the African Affairs Bureau at the State Department has refused repeated bipartisan calls on the administration to release $5 million to the Special Court for security and other needs. This pittance, which has already been appropriated, is sitting in State's coffers while Crane and his team's safety remain under constant threat. Finally, this year, Kansteiner's team at State, working closely with West Africa's regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), steered Taylor and the rebels toward June peace talks in Ghana, a setting that would once again afford Taylor the role of statesman and peacemaker. "A lot of people were saying this looks like Lomé part two," says a Senate Democratic aide. There was just one problem with the administration's shift toward engagement: Taylor was already an indicted war criminal.

CRANE HAD INDICTED Taylor in March. And, although the indictment was sealed, it was possibly the worst-kept secret in African diplomacy. In unsealed documents, Taylor was repeatedly mentioned as a member of the joint criminal enterprise in the region; moreover, Crane himself talked regularly with members of Congress and the Bush administration, and court officials insist it is inconceivable that State didn't know of the indictment. Still, the administration proceeded with its plan for the U.S.-backed Ghana negotiations—that is, until Crane took matters into his own hands. Disgusted at the prospect of a war criminal who had already broken more than a dozen peace agreements becoming a party to peace talks, Crane unsealed his indictment as soon as he confirmed that Taylor had landed in Ghana, detonating the talks and sending Taylor scurrying back to Liberia before he could be arrested.

It was only after the pretense that Taylor was a man the United States could negotiate with was thus shattered that Bush began calling for him to step down. "One minute they are negotiating with him, and the next minute, it's 'he has to go,'" says the Senate aide. And, while this is certainly progress, the most important question remains not whether Bush will send troops to Liberia but whether he will insist Taylor be brought before the court. If Taylor slinks off into exile in Nigeria or elsewhere, he will undoubtedly return to Liberia once international attention moves elsewhere, to again foment the slaughter and chaos that have been his calling card for 15 years. Indeed, Taylor himself has already promised that any exile will only be temporary.

A coalition of congressional Republicans and Democrats has pressed Colin Powell to abandon the Kansteiner track and pursue prosecution. They have asked Powell to increase funding for the Special Court and warned the administration against a "soft landing" for Taylor. "I think Taylor must be tried and imprisoned," says Republican Representative Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa. "He's spoken of a brief exile and a cooling-off period. That's unacceptable. There can't be peace in the region with him free. ... There are several hundred thousand human beings who lost their lives because of this individual." Royce is correct: Whether or not the United States sends troops to stabilize Liberia, our West Africa policy will be a failure unless we insist that Taylor go before the court. Let's hope President Bush comes to understand this as well. ■

On sodomy, the Court overreaches.

Kennedy Curse

BY JEFFREY ROSEN

"IS *LAWRENCE* WORSE than *Roe*?" read an e-mail message sent by *Crisis*, the conservative Catholic journal, after the Supreme Court struck down every sodomy law in the United States two weeks ago. And the answer, for liberal and conservative defenders of judicial restraint, should be unequivocal. Yes, in terms of its unnecessary breadth, *Lawrence* is worse than *Roe*. The Court could have struck down Texas's sodomy law

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on the narrow grounds that it violated the equal protection of the laws by forbidding homosexual but not heterosexual sodomy. But, instead, the Court embraced and extended a sweeping and amorphous right to sexual liberty that is as hard to locate in the text or history of the Constitution as the right of reproductive autonomy the Court discovered in *Roe*. By resurrecting an unprincipled and unconvincing constitutional methodology, the Court will energize the social conservatives who are foundering in the culture war, allowing them to cast themselves as defenders of judicial restraint rather than political losers.

The more modest case against the Texas sodomy law was set out by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor in her concurring opinion, and it goes something like this: Texas is one of only four states that bans sodomy for homosexuals but not heterosexuals. A state should be free to criminalize acts that it considers immoral but may not ban those acts only when committed by certain classes of people. The only reason to ban sodomy for homosexuals but not heterosexuals, O'Connor suggested, could be "a bare ... desire to harm a politically unpopular group," and the Court has consistently held that this is not a legitimate state interest. The constitutional guarantee of equality prohibits laws passed for the sole purpose of signaling that some groups of people are inferior to others—there is no caste system in the United States—and, for this reason, Texas's anti-sodomy law had to fall. An opinion striking down the Texas law on this ground would have left the states free to ban sodomy, or other sexual practices of which they disapproved, such as bestiality or prostitution, as long as they did so in an evenhanded way.

It's true that evenhanded laws banning sodomy have a greater effect on gays and lesbians than straight people. But, in cases involving race and gender discrimination, the Court has held repeatedly that laws can't be struck down as unconstitutional simply because of their discriminatory effects; in order to violate the equal protection clause, they have to have a discriminatory purpose as well. Without this well-established and necessary limitation on its power, the Court would be forced to strike down a daunting array of neutral state policies that have unintentional discriminatory effects—from SAT and employment tests that inadvertently discriminate against minorities to increases in bus fares that inadvertently discriminate against the poor.

But, in his opinion for the Court, Justice Anthony Kennedy took a far more grandiose approach than O'Connor's emphasis on equality. He said the case "involves liberty of the person both in its spatial and more transcendent dimensions." He then made clear how transcendent he considered these dimensions by quoting his own paean to liberty from *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*—the case that reaffirmed *Roe* in 1992—a dictum that Justice Antonin Scalia called the "sweet-mystery-of-life passage": "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." This passage has been properly ridiculed by lower-court judges for the past decade for its melodramatic implications. If carried to its logical conclusion, it seems to read the libertarian harm principle of John Stuart Mill into the Constitution, preventing the state from forbidding individuals from engaging in behavior that the majority considers immoral but that poses no harm to others. Although there is no more inspiring defender of liberty than Mill, his harm principle is hard to reconcile with more than 200 years of U.S. constitutional history, where states have been traditionally free to regulate behavior to promote "health, safety, and morals." But, in *Lawrence*, Kennedy, joined by four of his colleagues, made clear that a majority of the Rehnquist Court does in fact mean to read the "sweet-mystery" passage as broadly as possible. He said that states and courts should not attempt to "define the meaning of the [intimate sexual] relationship or to set its boundaries absent injury to a person or abuse of an institution the law protects." As Scalia correctly observes, "This effectively decrees the end of all morals legislation."

THE REASON LIBERAL and conservative defenders of judicial restraint have long been skeptical of the Court's increasingly abstract odes to sexual autonomy is that their constitutional roots are flimsy. The Court's first references to the idea that the Constitution protects private decisions regarding marriage and family life took place in the 1920s, when the Court struck down nativist state laws prohibiting parents from teaching their children foreign languages. But those cases were better defended by reference to the First Amendment right of free expression and had nothing to do with sexual freedom. In *Griswold* v. *Connecticut* in 1965, the Court struck down a state law forbidding the use of contraceptives; but, despite its infamous references to "penumbras, formed by emanations" from the Bill of Rights, it failed to identify any constitutional provision that protects a broad right of personal autonomy. In a more convincing concurring opinion, Justice John Harlan emphasized the special status of the marital bedroom. Following Harlan's example, the Court in *Lawrence* could have invoked the Fourth Amendment's special concern with intrusive searches of the home. The police had a valid warrant to investigate a report of a weapons disturbance, but the report turned out to be false. As a result, the Court might have held that enforcing sodomy laws isn't a serious enough state interest to justify invasive searches of people's bedrooms. This more modest recognition of the right to spatial privacy would have prevented states from regulating sodomy, fornication, or masturbation in the home without prohibiting them from regulating other behavior of which they disapprove that takes place outside the home—such as polygamy.

But the right Kennedy announces has nothing to do with spatial privacy; instead it is unmasked as a sweeping right of sexual autonomy. The roots of this right were planted not in *Griswold* but in a 1972 case in which the Court declared that the right to privacy must include the right of married or single people to make intimate decisions about procreation. In *Roe*, the Court expanded this right even further but

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again never explained where the right came from—it simply asserted that the liberty protected by the Constitution was "broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy," citing the Court's traditional concern about the freedom of marriage and family life. Finally, in reaffirming *Roe* in 1992, the Court abandoned all pretense of protecting traditional relationships of marriage and the family and, with Kennedy's "sweet-mystery" passage, seemed to suggest that any restrictions on sexual freedom were constitutionally suspicious. Now comes *Lawrence* to confirm Scalia's wildest fears.

Kennedy's opinion relies heavily on the idea of a growing national consensus against legislating on matters of morality. As evidence, he cites state legislatures' decisions to repeal sodomy laws over the course of the last 20 years. But it's not at all clear from that record that a national consensus exists: In 1986, 25 states banned sodomy in some form; today, 13 continue to do so. But only four sodomy laws were repealed by state legislatures since 1986; eight, meanwhile, were struck down by state courts—often under the same expansive privacy reasoning that the Supreme Court failed to defend in *Lawrence*. In 1965, by contrast, Connecticut was the only state in the country that still banned the use of contraceptives; and Justice Harlan said the "utter novelty" of the law was, for him, conclusive.

Obviously, there has been a sea change in public attitudes toward sexual behavior since the '60s, which is why the right is losing the culture war and only a minority of social conservatives, such as Justice Scalia, will lament the end of sodomy laws today. As Karlyn Bowman of the American Enterprise Institute notes in a recent study of public attitudes about homosexuality, 43 percent of respondents told Gallup interviewers in 1977 that homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal, while 60 percent gave that response in 2003. Nevertheless, the public as a whole has not yet embraced Millian liberalism in all its dimensions. As Bowman notes, "In 1973, when the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago first asked people about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, 73 percent described them as 'always wrong' and another 7 percent as 'almost always wrong.' When the organization last asked the question in 2002, 53 percent called them always wrong and 5 percent almost always wrong." That's still a majority. Although judicial activism may be justified when the Court acts to bring one or two state outliers into sync with an overwhelming national consensus, there is today no national consensus that states may not legislate on the basis of moral disapproval. It's easy to ridicule Scalia for defending the state's ability to criminalize fornication, masturbation, bestiality, prostitution, nude dancing, and obscenity. But, absent an overwhelming national consensus against these laws, Scalia's constitutional question to his colleagues—why are the states suddenly prohibited from banning consensual sexual activity on moral grounds?—deserves an answer. Unfortunately, they gave none.

THE MOST UNSETTLING implication of the Court's expansive new right of sexual autonomy relates to gay marriage. Justice O'Connor tried to preserve laws limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples by announcing tersely that "preserving the traditional institution of marriage" is a legitimate state interest. But, as Justice Scalia was quick to observe, " 'Preserving the traditional institution of marriage' is just a kinder way of describing the State's *moral disapproval* of same-sex couples." Since allowing homosexuals to marry has no obvious impact on the willingness of heterosexuals to marry, it's hard to think of a reason for courts to avoid extending the Court's new right to "define the meaning" of intimate relations to include a right of all people to marry, regardless of their sex. Of course, the arguments on behalf of a judicially created right of gay marriage—whether located in the right to equality or the right to privacy—are not frivolous. But they are also not constitutionally restrained—not clearly rooted, that is, in text, history, or tradition. And, as a pragmatic matter, defenders of equal civil rights for gays and lesbians will rue the day that lower courts begin to follow the example of their Canadian counterparts and recognize a right of gay marriage on a national scale. For the political backlash against a judicially created right to gay marriage would be so swift and dramatic—at least in the immediate future—that it would set back the cause of gay and lesbian equality rather than advance it. The recent momentum behind a federal constitutional amendment to prohibit gay marriage is only the first evidence of the political backlash to come as lower courts begin to invoke *Lawrence* to recognize gay marriage rights before the public is willing to accept them. Gay rights advocates who are celebrating the *Lawrence* decision today may find themselves in the same position as the pro-choice advocates who applauded *Roe* in 1973, not realizing that it would provoke a conservative counterreaction that would set them back in a political arena where they were well on their way to winning people's hearts and minds.

Indeed, the grandiosity of the *Lawrence* decision reveals how little liberal and conservative justices have learned about the hazards of activism in the 30 years since *Roe* was decided. There were moments on the Rehnquist Court when it seemed the justices had gotten out of the business of reading broad rights of personal autonomy into the Constitution—most notably in the right-to-die case in 1997, where they unanimously refused to create a broad right of physician-assisted suicide. But, in a single, unnecessarily dramatic gesture, those bipartisan murmurings of restraint have gone out the window. The fact that the Court is likely to get away with its activism—in the short term, few Americans will march to the barricades on behalf of sodomy laws—can't undo the damage of another self-inflicted wound. For, when the next confirmation conflagration comes, the conservative minority that was losing the culture war in the political arena will be able to attack the Supreme Court for having turned them into victims, rather than being forced to acknowledge their failure to convince

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their fellow citizens of the rightness of their cause. "The Court has taken sides in the culture war," Scalia charged in a foreshadowing of the conservative attacks to come.

Next to the hyperbole of Kennedy and Scalia, the most convincing opinions in *Lawrence* were the most modest. Just as O'Connor made the case for striking down the Texas law in the narrowest possible terms, so Justice Clarence Thomas gave us a dissent of eloquent simplicity. "The law before the Court today 'is ... uncommonly silly,'" he said, quoting Justice Potter Stewart's dissent in the contraceptives case. "If I were a member of the Texas Legislature, I would vote to repeal it." Nevertheless, Thomas said he was unable to find in the Constitution a "general right of privacy," or, as the Court called it, "the liberty of the person both in its spatial and more transcendent dimensions." The fact that the majority didn't bother to respond to Thomas shows how little the judicial activists on the left and the right have learned from the errors of *Roe*. Their lack of self-discipline will only fan the flames of our judicial confirmation battles in the future, whether they occur this week, next year, or in the years to come. ■

On sodomy, the Court gets it right.

Citizens

BY ANDREW SULLIVAN

A FEW DAYS before *Lawrence* v. *Texas* was decided, I asked myself, as a mental exercise, what I truly hoped would happen. I imagined that I would want the anti-sodomy law to be struck down on the narrowest possible grounds, for several reasons: I'm a skeptic of judicial activism; I feared a backlash if the ruling was too sweeping; I felt more powder should be kept dry for the gay-marriage fight. And then I read Justice Anthony Kennedy's ruling and watched as so many around me expressed a sense of joy and relief I don't think even they anticipated, and I changed my mind. I changed it not because I got carried away with emotion (although I'd be a fool not to admit some). I changed my mind because Kennedy reminded me of something I already believed: that, as long as you acknowledge that gay people are human beings with no choice over their orientation, there can be no constitutional or moral defense of sodomy laws, period.

I know of no more eloquent or principled a defender of judicial restraint than my old friend and colleague, Jeffrey Rosen. And, broadly speaking, his concerns about judicial overreach—even in the case of *Lawrence*—are lucid and important. But I think he misses the moment of this occasion, in the same way I did before it actually occurred. To take Rosen's fundamental point: He favored the narrower Justice Sandra Day O'Connor ruling that would have allowed states to ban sodomy, just not selectively against homosexuals. Rosen argues, "The constitutional guarantee of equality prohibits laws passed for the sole purpose of signaling that some groups of people are inferior to others—there is no caste system in the United States—and, for this reason, Texas's anti-sodomy law had to fall. An opinion striking down the Texas law on this ground would have left the states free to ban sodomy, or other sexual practices of which they disapproved, such as bestiality or prostitution, as long as they do so in an evenhanded way."

The assumption in this argument is that, as long as they formally apply to everyone, sodomy laws impact gay and straight citizens alike. But they don't. A general ban on sodomy, for example, would require heterosexuals to conduct their sexual relationships in such a way that they only practice vaginal intercourse (rather than oral or anal sex or any other number of permutations on non-procreative sex). But, because gay men and women cannot have anything but sodomitic sex, they have no way to conduct sexual relationships within the law. The impact of such laws on these citizens is therefore to deny them all private sexual relationships—an impact that is different not just in degree but in kind. It might be argued, as Rosen does, that such laws can still be constitutional if they are not passed with a clear intention to discriminate. In theory, this might hold water. But, in practice, it doesn't. Can anyone believe that general anti-sodomy laws are not intended to target homosexuals? When was the last time you heard a legislator argue that it's an important state interest to prevent heterosexuals from having oral sex? Rosen's suggestion that sodomy laws' discriminatory impact on homosexuals is an extraneous side effect gets things exactly backward: It's the whole purpose. In fact, it's hard to believe there would be any legal sanction against sodomy at all if it were an entirely heterosexual practice.

Rosen argues further that the culture is moving in the direction of liberalization anyway and the courts would do better to wait and see and allow the legislatures to repeal these laws. And, indeed, many such laws have fallen by the wayside. But, as Rosen notes, many have been repealed because of court action, not majority rule. And there's little reason to believe that the 95 percent or more of Texas voters, who are utterly unaffected by the state's sodomy law but who enjoy its symbolic stigmatization of gay people, would ever muster up the will to repeal the law by themselves. Why would they? The vast majority of heterosexuals, after all, simply have no idea what it might be like to live in a relationship that is a criminal activity and can be used against them at any time in a whole variety of ways. It is so alien to their experience that it is a stretch even to imagine it. How else to explain Justice Clarence Thomas's description of anti-sodomy laws as "uncommonly silly." It's "silly" to criminalize a couple in private for actions that harm no one. It's "silly" to use the law to render all gay people in relationships, or merely those having sex lives, criminals.

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Would Thomas find it "uncommonly silly" if he were liable to be arrested in his bedroom for consensual sex with his own wife? I doubt it. He would be outraged.

DOES THAT MEAN morals legislation is now over? Well, that all depends on what you mean by morals. Rosen argues, "It's easy to ridicule [Justice Antonin] Scalia for defending the state's ability to criminalize fornication, masturbation, bestiality, prostitution, nude dancing, and obscenity. But, absent an overwhelming national consensus against these laws, Scalia's constitutional question to his colleagues—why are the states all of a sudden prohibited from banning consensual sexual activity on moral grounds?—deserves an answer. Unfortunately, they give none."

In the first place, none of the activities Scalia and Rosen cite can be interpreted as a way to prevent a class of people from having the most basic freedom imaginable: to have an intimate, private, adult, consensual relationship. In that sense, the sodomy laws are and were different. Secondly, the activities Rosen cites are not all private and consensual. Prostitution is an economic activity; obscenity requires the act of publishing or displaying in public. Ditto nude dancing. When you whittle down the list to those activities that actually are equivalent to sodomy—masturbation and fornication—I'd argue that there is indeed a vast national consensus in favor of keeping those activities from being subject to government criminalization. Even on sodomy laws, growing majorities opposed them before their repeal—including denizens of the conservative movement, such as *The Wall Street Journal* and Justice Thomas. In fact, the only relevant moral distinction between sodomy and masturbation is that the former requires a relationship and penalizes a class of people. To my mind, that makes criminalizing sodomy *more* objectionable than criminalizing masturbation.

Moreover, morals are slippery things. When Scalia invokes "morality," he doesn't ask whether such a "morality" is rational or meaningful. His only criterion for morality is whether a majority of people believe it. Scalia is frank about this. For him, "morality" can simply be an expression of disdain or disapproval: " 'Preserving the traditional institution of marriage' is just a kinder way of describing the State's moral disapproval of same-sex couples," he gently observes. Notice here how the disapproval is not directed at an act but at a *couple*, a remarkable conflation of morality with disdain. Or look at it this way: If a majority simply asserts that a minority is "immoral," needs to provide no argument as to why, and engages with impunity in the very same acts that are deemed "immoral" among the minority, then we have nothing less than majority tyranny. There are many duties of courts, it seems to me. But protecting tiny minorities from prejudices that criminalize their very beings strikes me as a pretty good definition of what a court should be about. The Supreme Court protects religious minorities and racial minorities. Why can it not protect sexual and emotional minorities as well?

The answer to that, historically, is that the Court never really acknowledged the existence of such an emotional-sexual minority until very recently. Gay people were invisible to the law—partly criminals, partly perverts, partly non-people who for some reason did unmentionable things to each other. They were allowed no legal standing for their families or their relationships; in fact, it was widely believed that they had no families or relationships. They were denied even the legal right to conduct their relationships behind closed doors. No, the Founding Fathers did not acknowledge or deal with this—just as they did not acknowledge the equality of women or blacks or the ubiquity of safe and easy contraception. But is our Constitution, in grappling with the most vital matters of individual privacy and freedom, restricted in its view of the universe to the sexual understandings of the 1780s? Surely, we can apply what we now know about gay people and what we have always believed about limited government and come to some settlement that does justice to both. Anything else conveys such a blindness to the evil of criminalizing private love that it reflects less judicial restraint than judicial negligence.

SO WAS *LAWRENCE* worse than *Roe*? Hardly. *Roe* built on the privacy doctrine hatched in *Griswold*, which established the right of couples to use contraception without government interference. Both decisions were more radical than the current one, first and foremost because they predate *Lawrence* by decades. And, whatever you think about the constitutional right to privacy (I'm a skeptic), it seems clear that it is now a settled part of the law, as the endurance of *Roe* suggests. To leave *Roe* and *Griswold* intact but to refuse to invoke them with regard to *Lawrence* makes no sense at all. In fact, in some ways, we already had a constitutional defense of sodomy on the grounds of privacy before *Lawrence*. That defense was *Griswold*. Morally and theologically, there is no difference between contraception and sodomy, inasmuch as both are sex acts divorced from procreation—the deepest meaning of sodomy. If straights have a constitutional right to privacy that includes sodomy, on what grounds do you deny it to gay people? Far from stretching this privacy principle any further, *Lawrence* has simply tidied it up by treating gay people and straight people as equal citizens.

But that doesn't quite capture what I'm trying to say, so let me be simpler: I am glad that so many now feel that this country no longer criminalizes them for being who they are. And I think it is to the great credit of this Supreme Court that they didn't flinch in sticking to their principles to the extent of enfranchising a group so long despised. The breadth of the ruling says one thing more: It protects homosexuals within a rubric that has long protected heterosexuals. By bringing us all under the same constitutional roof, the Court also nudged along the process of inclusion, understanding, and healing that is the mark of all true civil rights movements. It made sexual orientation less important. It made citizenship deeper. ■

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What happened to the WMD?

The Vanishing

BY BOB DROGIN

MUTHANNA, IRAQ

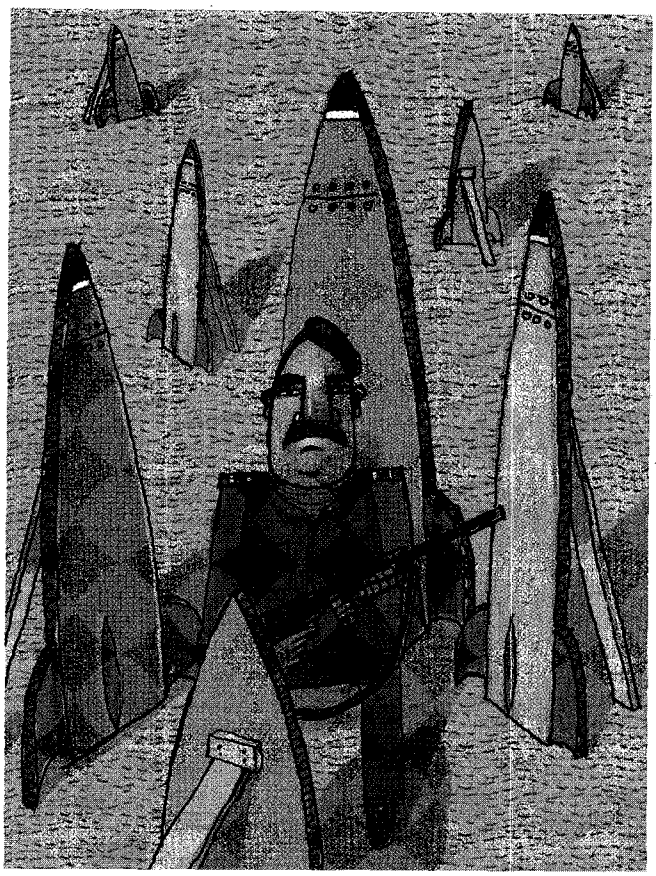
DR. ALAA SAEED is an affable man with a shy smile and a thinning thatch of wispy white hair above thick, gold-rimmed glasses. He wears short-sleeved white shirts and permanent-press gray slacks. He has the polite, self-effacing manner of a small-town pharmacist. You wouldn't suspect that the 51-year-old, British-trained chemist helped found and direct Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons program.

I met Saeed one recent morning in Baghdad as he and two-dozen other former Iraqi weapons scientists and military officials waited their turn to be questioned by "John," the head of an American interrogation team. The Americans refused to identify themselves or their agency. The British spooks, by contrast, were more polite. Saeed already had been grilled by "Miss Rebecca," who told him she came from MI-6, London's foreign intelligence service. After chatting a bit, I invited Saeed to lunch. We met twice that week for coffee, and ultimately I asked him to take me to his former workplace.

The next day, we drove 60 miles northwest to the Muthanna State Establishment. Muthanna was built by a French company in 1978, ostensibly as a pesticide plant. Instead, Muthanna became the heart of Saddam's chemical weapons program. By the mid-'80s, more than 1,000 people were secretly producing thousands of tons of nerve and blister agents at Muthanna, as well as running a pilot anthrax and botulinum biowarfare project. The secret was not well-kept. Muthanna was heavily bombed in the 1991 Gulf war and was literally the first stop for U.N. inspectors sent to Iraq after the 1991 cease-fire to supervise what they expected to be a brief disarmament effort.

Muthanna is desolate now. Portions remain of the front gate, an arched pair of yellow concrete scimitars, but garish murals of Saddam have been destroyed. Empty roads shimmer in the furnace-like heat, and a few skinny trees somehow survive in the roadside grit. But mostly there is devastation. Saeed tells my driver to stop every few hundred yards so he can play tour guide. "This is P-7, the production plant for sarin and tabun," he says, getting out so we can climb through a heap of concrete slabs, broken tiles, and crumpled pipes. He points to another bombed-out ruin. "On the right is P-8, where we made mustard gas." We stop again, and he nods at a dun-colored building that was the "animal house" for donkeys, dogs, rabbits, rats, and guinea pigs. "We tied them up in inhalation chambers and released the agents," he explains. "Blood would run from their eyes, noses, and mouths, and they would convulse." Scientists, he says, were kept under the watchful eyes and guns of a secret police detachment camped next door.

Saeed first came to Muthanna in 1980 with a half-dozen other military scientists to set up Project 922, which was dedicated to the covert production of chemical weapons. With a master's degree in chemistry from the University of Baghdad and a membership card in Saddam's Baath Party, Saeed was appointed chief of quality control, responsible for certifying every production run. He already had served



Was Saddam Hussein too proud to concede he no longer had weapons of mass destruction?

ROBERT MEGANCK

Bob Drogin covers national security for the LOS ANGELES TIMES.

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eight years in the army's chemical defense corps, which helped train and protect Iraqi soldiers against chemical attacks from Iran, Iraq's chief enemy at the time. Now he and his colleagues were on offense. Their first success was mustard gas, a World War I blister agent that causes debilitating injuries to the eyes, lungs, and skin. After a few test runs, Muthanna soon was churning out 900 tons of mustard gas per year. Then, in 1983, Saeed and his colleagues began producing more lethal nerve agents—first tabun, then sarin and cyclosarin, which are absorbed through the skin or respiratory tract and can cause death within a few minutes. The purity of the nerve agents varied widely, but Iraq used thousands of chemical-filled bombs, rockets, and artillery shells during the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war. U.N. investigators estimated they caused up to 80,000 Iranian casualties. Baghdad also used Muthanna's blister and nerve agents against Kurds in northern Iraq. Saeed left Muthanna for three years in 1985 to get a Ph.D. from the University of Sussex in England. He liked the dowdy seaside town of Brighton and briefly considered staying and joining a real estate firm there. "I was very tempted, but I have a big family—two sisters and six brothers—and [regime officials] told my parents, 'If your son does not return, we will kill you,' " he says.

When he got back in 1988, Muthanna was bustling. We drive down a gravel road so he can show me the rubble-filled site where he focused his work for the next three years. "We called this the Dhia'a Plant. It is where we made VX," Saeed says. VX, first developed by British scientists in the 1950s, paralyzes the nervous system and is dozens of times stronger than sarin. The four-stage VX production process is difficult, but the Muthanna scientists reverse-engineered the recipe from a list of controlled chemicals issued by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. Saeed says he supervised production of his last two batches of liquid VX in April 1990 but that they failed to achieve his goal of 50 to 60 percent purity, and they deteriorated within a week. "It couldn't be used as a weapon," he insists.

Concerns about VX were central to the Bush administration's prewar claims that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) presented an imminent threat. In the early '90s, Iraqi officials repeatedly denied developing VX. After U.N. inspectors found proof of VX in 1995, Baghdad acknowledged producing 3.9 tons but insisted it was never deployed as a weapon. U.N. inspectors weren't so sure. In 1998, they found VX products in a missile warhead. More important, they warned that Iraq could still be hiding enough precursor chemicals to produce up to 200 tons of VX. Iraq consistently denied possessing those chemicals, however, and their existence was never proved. Saeed claims the VX dispute was based on a misunderstanding. In 1991, he says senior Iraqi officials ordered him to destroy his records and to deny producing VX in order to bring a quick end to U.N. inspections. He says he tried to tell the truth after 1995 but that his previous lies undermined his attempts to come clean. "When the U.N. inspectors first came, my superior told me, 'Because you did not succeed in producing VX, why tell them about it? It takes too much time. So forget about it.' I had to tear up or burn our documents. So we hid the VX program from 1991 to 1995. After that, of course, they did not believe us. But that is the real story."

The idea that Saddam did not secretly continue building chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons directly contradicts White House claims. But the Iraqi scientists I met insist that the combination of U.S. bombing, U.N. inspections, disarmament efforts, unilateral destruction by Iraqi officials, and stiff U.N. sanctions had indeed eliminated Saddam's illicit weapons by the mid-'90s. At the same time, however, Saddam's efforts to hide or destroy documents hindered efforts to ultimately resolve scores of questions about the disposition of missing materials and equipment. In addition, fear of Saddam kept many scientists from telling the dictator the truth about their WMD programs. Ultimately, the scientists and others say, Saddam may have feared that admitting his WMD were gone would have shown a weakness that could have threatened his hold on power. These overlapping theories may not fully explain why American forces have not found WMD in Iraq. But, for now, they're the best we have.

In 1998, the United Nations withdrew its weapons inspectors from Iraq before a series of U.S. and British bombing raids. The final report from the U.N. inspectors in January 1999 focused chiefly on questions about unaccounted-for raw materials, documents, and equipment related to WMD programs. The Bush administration went to war this year on the assumption that those unaccounted for materials—such as VX precursor chemicals—were still present in Iraq. But, according to Iraqi scientists, some of those chemicals had never existed or had been destroyed by U.N. inspectors, by Iraqi authorities, or by the passage of time. "A lot of projects were just ink on paper," a former senior Iraqi intelligence officer tells me over coffee one morning in Baghdad.

So why did Saddam's regime deceive U.N. inspectors for twelve years? Why did it organize traffic jams, lock doors, hide documents, bus in jeering crowds, and do everything else it could to frustrate the U.N. weapons teams between 1991 and 1998? Why did Saeed, appointed deputy minder to the U.N. inspectors after 1991, help author all three of Iraq's bogus chemical weapons declarations to the U.N. Security Council, including large parts of the 12,000-page document handed over last December? An honest report might have prevented war. Instead, like its predecessors, it was quickly rejected as inaccurate and incomplete.

When I ask him, Saeed says he doesn't know exactly why Saddam continued deceiving the world. Back in 1991, he says, his supervisor, Hussam Mohammed Amin (who was taken into U.S. custody in April), ordered him to destroy all his original notes and records in an attempt to cover up

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Iraq's pre–Gulf war chemical weapons programs. When it came time to write the first chemical weapons report to the Security Council in 1994, he says, "We had to do it mostly from memory. We worked day and night for six months. Maybe we could collect a piece of paper here and there or check labels on some equipment. Maybe some numbers were not right." Without the original records, he says, his follow-up reports were just as bad. U.N. inspectors were convinced the inaccuracies were deliberate, in part because they kept finding evidence—from shipping records to chemical residue—proving that Iraq's WMD programs in the '80s were much more extensive than it had admitted.

In some cases, fear of Saddam prevented the scientists from revealing to the dictator that the WMD programs had failed or been destroyed. "People were afraid to tell Saddam," the intelligence officer says. After all, in a land ruled by torture and terror, what official would admit that he did not achieve 100 percent of his assigned production? Even correcting the numbers later was dangerous. "Because then we will look like liars," the intelligence officer explains. "And that will make Iraq look bad [to the world]. And people will lose their heads." Indeed, agents from at least three branches of Saddam's ruthless security services spied not only on the inspectors but also on the inspectors' minders. "They are watching us always. Are we saying too much? Are we whispering?" Saeed pauses. "Even if I go out on Friday, the day of rest, if I go to Arasat Street [the commercial center of Baghdad] and I see a U.N. inspector and he comes up and says, 'Hello,' I am very scared. Because I know he is being followed by the Mukhabarat [the secret police], and, if they see us together, they will think I am helping them. So I just say very quickly, 'Hello, I'm sorry, I must go. Goodbye, goodbye.'" He stares down at the ground, and his voice suddenly sounds angry. "The Mukhabarat. I hate them."

But, if the WMD were gone, why didn't Saddam cooperate in the '90s, if only to get the United Nations off his back so he could resume building his weapons? Why didn't he cooperate last year in order to appease the White House and avoid a war that would topple his regime? The prevailing theory among former U.N. inspectors and current American, British, and Australian weapons-hunters interviewed for this story is that Saddam was too proud to concede that he no longer possessed WMD. To admit this point would have meant bowing to the West. He would have appeared weak, and weakness would have threatened his hold on power at home and his vainglorious self-image as a leader of the Arab world. Instead, Saddam thought he could bully his way through this crisis, as he had in previous standoffs with the United States and its allies. The inspectors say Saddam believed that uncertainty about WMD could again serve as a deterrent to American forces. After all, in the wake of the 1991 war, U.N. inspectors learned Saddam had told aides that coalition ground forces had not pressed on to Baghdad because they were afraid of his chemical and biological weapons.

Of course, the possibility that Saddam no longer possessed WMD does not mean that he no longer wanted to possess them. The former senior intelligence officer, a barrel-chested brigadier general who still wears a large watch with Saddam's portrait etched in gold on the face, insists that no chemical or biological weapons were produced in Iraq after the mid-'90s. But he does not pretend Saddam suddenly went legit. Indeed, the officer says he helped manage a maze of overseas trading companies run by Iraqi intelligence operatives and designed to support Iraq's sanctions-busting procurement schemes. He made seven overseas trips after the mid-'90s to help buy and ship spare parts, raw materials, and other supplies for Saddam's conventional weapons programs. On his last trip, in April 2001, he went to Jordan, Cyprus, Morocco, South Africa, and Argentina, using phony passports from neighboring Arab nations, to help arrange the secret purchase of $57 million worth of cannons, artillery fuses, calibrating instruments, and other weapons parts. As on previous trips, he also helped buy and smuggle "dual-use" items, such as medical laboratory equipment, which might someday be used to build chemical and biological weapons if the United Nations declared Iraq WMD-free and lifted sanctions. Indeed, he says that, in 1996, Saddam ordered his intelligence services to create a series of secret cells of Iraqi scientists and technicians. The groups—each with about four or five members—met regularly in Baghdad basements and did small experiments in underground laboratories. Their goal was not to build weapons. It was to formulate plans on how to build them when the United Nations lifted sanctions. "We could start again anytime," the intelligence officer says. "It's very easy. Especially biological."

SHOULD WE BELIEVE Saeed when he says Iraq has no hidden weapons today? He has lied before, and he and every other Iraqi I met are absolutely convinced that Saddam is alive—a viewpoint reinforced by the recent audiotape, allegedly by Saddam, broadcast on Al Jazeera. Many scientists are convinced that thugs from Saddam's regime will retaliate against anyone who cooperates with the U.S. military occupation. Saeed is clearly terrified. His voice drops and his hands began to tremble when he describes how the dictator's aides suddenly appeared at his office in late 1997. They ordered him into a car with shades drawn and drove him to an unknown location. Saddam was waiting inside. "He thanked me for my work," he recalls. "But I am still shaking."

Saeed also admits he might not have known if the Mukhabarat or other Iraqi intelligence organizations were conducting their own WMD programs. The weapons procurement and production efforts were so compartmentalized that, even as Saeed advanced—he was promoted to brigadier general after he began working with the U.N. inspectors—he still had only a limited view of the other programs. He was aware, for example, that the Mukhabarat had special laboratories in and around Baghdad but says he

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never saw them or knew of their purpose. On the other hand, any serious effort to produce chemical or biological agents would have required scores of scientists, engineers, technicians, drivers, and others. And American officials in Baghdad have offered a $200,000 cash reward and political asylum or a new identity outside Iraq to anyone who can provide proof of Iraq's forbidden weapons. If the weapons really exist, it is hard to understand why no one has grabbed that prize. Yet no one has produced the goods.

Facing this failure, the Pentagon announced with great fanfare in late April that it would overhaul the WMD hunt. Instead of just searching sites using outdated intelligence, the newly created Iraq Survey Group would seek new clues by analyzing hundreds of thousands of captured documents and by finding and interrogating anyone, from top scientists to office clerks, who might know about them. But the new operation has been slow to start. Having run out of valid targets, most of the weapons-hunting teams were sidelined for much of June as they awaited new orders. It took American intelligence two weeks to find Saeed and his colleagues, and they were hardly hiding. Hoping the Americans would come to pay their back salaries, they gathered each morning outside a looted office building that once was home to the National Monitoring Directorate (NMD), the agency set up by Saddam's regime to work with U.N. inspectors. American officials would not allow me to observe any of the interrogations at the NMD building or at Camp Slayer, a former palace complex that now is home to the weapons-hunters and U.S. intelligence operations. But it is not hard to figure out what the Americans are asking. "Their questions are the same as yours," Saeed tells me. " 'Do you know of any documents or inventory of chemical agents? Any stockpiles? Any production programs? Any filled munitions?' ... I am ready to give them all the information I have. But the answer is always the same, 'No, no, no.' "

Outside the NMD building, I hear the same kind of answers from General Jamil Raad, a large, bullnecked man whose face appears set in a permanent scowl, and from other scientists. Raad was director general of the Salahaldeen factory, which produced radar, military communications, and electronics equipment at Al Dour, near Tikrit. He points to a knot of ten men whom he says he brought to meet the Americans. All had worked for the Military Industrialization Company (MIC), the vast network of arms and trading companies responsible for most of Iraq's weapons production and procurement, and are willing to speak with the American interrogators—though, they insist, they had no information to offer. "I told them we are all ready to cooperate with any of the questions they have," Raad says. "But there are no hidden weapons." Nearby is Dr. Mahmoud Dagher, the former acting director of the MIC. He sighs and studies my business card closely when I ask about his interrogation. "They ask the same questions every day," he says. "I told them, 'We gave [the U.N. inspectors] everything, and nothing was kept.' " He says he too had turned down the $200,000 offer. "The money is nothing. The truth is the truth."

TRUTH, OF COURSE, is in short supply in Iraq. The CIA complains that high-profile captives are sticking to a party line, which some CIA people believe may be untrue. "They all say the same thing," a CIA official told me. " 'We don't know anything about WMD, we don't know about POWs, we never met Saddam. Sorry, can't help you.' "

Yet U.S. tactics haven't helped the search. The American occupation forces have not clearly explained whether the scientists who cooperate will be treated as heroes or as criminals. In June, Mahdi Obeidi, a former senior Iraqi nuclear scientist, voluntarily led the CIA to his rose garden in Baghdad, where they dug up parts of a gas centrifuge machine as well as a two-foot-high stack of blueprints, manuals, and other documents that he had buried. Obeidi told the CIA that Saddam's nuclear weapons program had been destroyed by Allied bombing and U.N. inspectors in the '90s but that Saddam still hoped to restart it. Indeed, Obeidi told the CIA that, if the United Nations had lifted sanctions, Iraq could have used the centrifuge parts as templates to enrich uranium for a nuclear bomb. But, two days after Obeidi turned his cache in to the CIA, the U.S. military broke down his front door and arrested him on suspicion that he was hiding other material as well. The CIA ultimately got him out of jail and moved Obeidi and his nine family members to Kuwait. But the episode is unlikely to encourage other Iraqi scientists to come forward.

Nor, in most cases, have American forces disclosed who they have detained or why, though word—and fear—spreads quickly. The day before I met Saeed and his colleagues, for example, "John" and his team had arrived with a handwritten list with the words "Taha-7" on top. It named six top aides to Dr. Rahib Rashid Taha, a dour, British-trained microbiologist known as Dr. Germ who was arrested after the war. In the '80s, Taha had supervised production of vast quantities of anthrax, botulinum, aflatoxin, and other lethal pathogens. "John" found three bioweapons experts from the list that day and took them away in his van, promising he would bring them back in an hour. By the time I left Iraq two weeks later, their families still had no idea where they were or when they might be released. Not surprisingly, the snatch didn't go down very well with their colleagues. The NMD building was deserted when I went back for a final visit.

In my last meeting with Saeed, I ask if he ever regretted producing chemical weapons for Saddam. He seems surprised. "In Iraq, we obey an order. We have no choice." What about the thousands of casualties and deaths they had caused? "It is not my responsibility to think how they might be used," he says. After I press him several times, he finally admits that perhaps he has one regret. "I wish I'd taken the estate agent job" in Brighton, he concedes. "I understand the property market has done very well." ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

The Unexpected Self

COINCIDENCE. LIKE *JET LAG,* reviewed last week, **FRIDAY NIGHT** is French, is set in Paris during a strike, and is almost exclusively about two people, a mature man and woman. But otherwise the films are quite different. *Jet Lag* is comic, built on a series of plot developments. *Friday Night* is serious and, though it certainly moves forward, is chiefly concerned with character, with self-discovery.

FRIDAY NIGHT
(Wellspring)

THE HULK
(Universal)

Claire Denis, the director, who is best known here for *Chocolat* and *Beau Travail,* adapted the screenplay from a novel by Emmanuèle Bernheim with Bernheim's help. The story is so simple that it bespeaks intelligence in the director. No one would make this film who was not less focused on sizzle than on secrets, in this case a woman's complexity. More, the director had to have a kind of loving confidence in the actress who would play the role. Of course Denis also had to have confidence in the texture that the man would bring to the film, but he is not equally explored.

As the title promises, it all takes place in one evening. Laure, a woman in her thirties, is packing her things in her apartment because the next day she is moving in with her boyfriend. She puts some of the cartons in the rear seat of her car and sets off to have dinner with friends. What she hasn't remembered is that a public transport strike is on: the streets are strangulated with stalled cars. This is surely the most horrendous such traffic jam on screen since Godard's *Weekend,* and similarly the jam affects much more than immediate plans.

Laure's car radio enjoins drivers to give lifts to pedestrians, and after turning down one man, she admits another to her car. He seems a few years older than she is, and he is quiet. They hardly converse. (This is true throughout the film.) They sit and wait. Very slowly, the car moves on. He smokes. (A chief difference between American and foreign films these days is cigarettes.) A restrained intimacy develops between them simply because of circumstances. At last she tells him her name. His, he says, is Jean. This is absolutely all that she ever learns factually about him.

She finds a moment to leave the car and telephone to cancel her dinner date. Still traffic-jammed, she lets her temper fray after a bit, and Jean says he had better get out. He does. She is sorry, leaves the immobilized car, and finds him in a café. They have a coffee. He asks the bartender for change, some ten-franc coins, and goes into the toilet. She assumes that he wants to make a phone call, but when she later goes in there herself, she sees that the phone accepts only phone cards. Next to it is a vending machine for condoms at ten francs each. Jean has made no kind of overture toward her, nor she toward him, but when they leave the café, they kiss in the dark street—suddenly but not surprisingly. They kiss and kiss. Then, the car presumably having been parked, they go to a nearby small hotel.

Their night together is like a rendezvous between two people who know each other well, like each other truly, and make love as if they were experienced with each other. By and by they go out for some food, then come back and literally sleep together, affectionately. In the morning Laure dresses, tries gently to bid goodbye to the sleeping Jean, then leaves. She walks down the empty street at dawn, then runs joyously. The film ends.

Look now at some of the details. Denis opens the film with shots of Paris rooftops as the sun slowly sets. This is the old-quarter Paris of René Clair, this is the opening of *Le Million* and *Sous les Toits de Paris.* But out of this legendary Paris we move into the harsh present. The narrow streets don't spell romance; they mean traffic jams. During the progress of the film, note the incised details: the young woman in the café playing the pinball machine who thinks that Jean's advice with the game may mean an advance and is peeved when it doesn't; the young but adequately bored desk clerk in the hotel who had hoped that the jam would bring customers but tells Laure and Jean that they have the place to themselves. Note, too, how Denis touches this gently coursing film from time to time with Laure's imaginings, flashed in and flashed out.

But the core of the piece is not in its details. It is in the broad, tacit acceptance that a person's unexpected behavior may not be completely surprising to that person and does not necessarily upset life patterns later on. Laure, as far as we know, will in fact move in with her boyfriend the next day and will think none the less of herself for the night with Jean, a secret that may indeed fortify her partnership.

It is of the essence of *Friday Night* that, though we learn some things about her, we never learn anything—not anything—about Jean except his name. This is Laure's story. It is she who has this adventure—with a man whom she does not know and will never see again. His address and vocation and marital status, whatever they may be, would only make the evening prosaic. Free of such details, she will be able to glow when she remembers this Friday night because it was enclosed, perfected by the qualities of Jean, not data about him. This Friday night will be a private, warm mystery in the middle of a world of traffic jams.

The two actors are completely winning. Valérie Lemercier makes Laure a woman who is sexual, not by ostentation but simply by existing. She seems curious throughout the film to discover what she will do next and is pleasantly surprised by what she finds out. Vincent Lindon as Jean is impressive through his decorum and his quietness. The moment when we discover why he has asked for the ten-

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franc coins is one of those pleasant backward illuminations: it tells us what he has been sensing in the car without one word about it.

The sequences in the hotel bed are stirring, but not with blatant detail. Denis and her editor, Nelly Quettier, have assumed that they do not have to show the details of sex because we know them already. Instead, Denis and Quettier create a small visual poem on the subject.

Since Ang Lee is the current king of versatility, having made films about his native Taiwan, Jane Austen's England, the American Civil War, and the Connecticut suburbs, I went to **THE HULK** to see what he had done with an American comic-book figure. Well, he has done everything except make it entertaining. The great glops of digital and other effects are even more boring than the straight stuff. In future Lee can best serve his versatility by never doing anything like this again.

Only one detail is notable. As with other comic-book figures, transformation of the hero is central. Here a young scientist, conventionally dressed, is transformed into a giant about fifteen feet tall. As he is being transformed, however, the otherwise naked giant acquires a pair of shorts. So we see his muscles but not anything else to fear or envy. ■

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Smelly Orthodoxies

WITH THE EXCEPTION of Tony Kushner's socially charged plays, American political drama has been in a deep sleep, if not a lifeless coma, for a number of years now. But I have just seen two works that indicate that this somnolent genre may be stretching, yawning, and preparing to stand on its feet again. Don't worry about a repeat of the awkward "theater is a weapon" sermonizing of the 1930s. Both these new plays are highly complicated creations—critical not just of easy targets like fascism or McCarthyism, but of all the "smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls."

A BAD FRIEND
(Lincoln Center Theater)

I AM MY OWN WIFE
(Playwrights Horizon)

This is George Orwell's phrase, and the two ideologies that most offended his nostrils, communism and Nazism, have obviously lost most of their stench in recent years. But as Jules Feiffer's new play **A BAD FRIEND** makes abundantly clear, old ideologies never fade away—they just take on a different odor. A self-righteous Stalinoid mindset, for example, has kept its hold on much of the intelligentsia to the present day, just as fascistic impulses continue to motivate white supremacists, skinheads, survivalists, anti-abortionists, and fanatical religious sects. Even the ghost of the House Un-American Activities Committee still haunts us in the form of the Patriot Act, which may very well turn out to be the last referendum of scoundrels.

At first glance, *A Bad Friend* looks like an out-of-date reprise of plays such as Eric Bentley's *Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been* and movies such as Walter Bernstein and Martin Ritt's *The Front*. Written in the punchy declarative style of Clifford Odets, the play is another indictment of all those desperate Hollywood types—Odets included—who named names to congressional investigators. Feiffer signals his debt to this compromised Group Theater icon in many ways, even naming one of his characters after Uncle Morty of *Awake and Sing!* (J. Edward Bromberg, who played the original Uncle Morty and whose memorial is mentioned in *A Bad Friend*, was one of the many victims of those informers, having suffered a fatal heart attack shortly after being exposed to the committee as a party member.) On the other hand, *A Bad Friend* shows even less patience with those American Communists—among them a number of Jews—who, while protesting the Rosenberg executions as the anti-Semitic actions of a war-mongering police state, were also apologizing for all of Stalin's anti-Semitic excesses, including the Soviet-Nazi pact and the "Doctors' Plot."

To make this double point, Feiffer sets his play among a "progressive" Jewish family living in Brooklyn Heights in the early 1950s. While the father (Shelly) and the mother (Naomi) are rigid party members, Naomi's brother, Uncle Morty, has been "radicalized," as he says, by MGM and RKO—notably by movies like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*. Now this studio slave (sleekly performed by Mark Feuerstein with a Malibu tan and two-tone shoes) writes Hollywood Westerns. The trajectory of Morty's career from fiery idealist to guilty sellout to friendly witness suggests a composite portrait of Odets and Kazan, indeed of all those sputtering firebrands who preserved their own careers by ruining the careers of others. By the end of the play, Morty has named his own sister as the person who brought him into the party, though he later tries to redeem himself by dedicating his Academy Award to her.

The observer of all these events is Rose, Naomi and Shelly's eighteen-year-old daughter, and "the only one in the family not in love with Stalin." Rose has serious doubts that everything will be perfect in a socialist state when "a socialist state will be run by people like our parents." She is, in other words, in mortal danger of becoming a liberal, a person defined by her father as one "who has her feet firmly planted in midair." Rose's lack of ideological certitude may be the reason she is simultaneously befriended by an FBI agent eager to get the goods on her Hollywood uncle and by a mysterious older man, a painter named Emil (played with patient melancholy by Larry Bryggman), who later turns out to be the notorious Soviet spy Colonel Rudolph Abel.

Perhaps because she is intended as a surrogate for the author, Rose emerges as the most politically sophisticated character in the play. Unfortunately, she is also the least convincing, at least in the unmodulated performance of Kala Savage—who, despite sensible shoes, frumpy clothes, and bad hair, still seems to be rooted in a teenage sitcom. Rose is a character always in the process of being educated. Uncle Morty teaches her the political implications of movies such as *High Noon* (not a left-wing Western, as the FBI believes, but a disguised attack on faint-hearted studio heads who collapsed

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under blacklist pressure). And Emil introduces her to Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, a gesture that, for reasons I am unable to fathom, leads to his unmasking as a Communist spy.

The climax of the play, and its best-written scene, occurs when Shelly suggests to Naomi that Stalin was planning a pogrom. "I could bring you up on charges," she shrieks, "take it back"—and Shelly meekly does. By the end of the production, Shelly (ruefully played by Jonathan Hadary) has died, disillusioned by the unpredictability of history, and Naomi (Jan Maxwell, powerfully embodying the sharp angularity of a Käthe Kollwitz drawing) sits on stage, numb and dazed, sadly shaking her head.

Jerry Zaks has devised a strong production, in which scenes change to the accompaniment of old Woody Guthrie songs and Union anthems, within a simple but eloquent set by Doug Stein. Time and place are signified mainly by filmed sequences and projections—principally a letterbox rendering of the New York skyline viewed from the Brooklyn Heights Esplanade. Zaks begins the show, alarmingly, at the breakneck speed of farce, but he soon lets it settle into a serious study of a period and its discontents. Indeed, the only lighthearted moment in the evening comes when Feiffer (nodding toward his Fred Astaire–inspired cartoon series "The Dancer") gets Morty and Naomi fox-trotting to the rhythms of "Cheek to Cheek."

Despite these occasional touches of charm and wit, *A Bad Friend* shows Feiffer working to restrain his distinctive satiric gifts in order to delineate character and to evoke a sense of actuality. For all the strengths of the play, he does not entirely succeed. I hope my old friend will not consider me a bad friend if I suggest that he needs to make his dialogue less quotable and his characters less defined by their politics if he wants to capture more of the flowing, stammering, unpredictable quality of life. In all other respects, this effort to re-create politically conscious theater is cause for celebration. And so is Feiffer's long-delayed return to the stage.

Tampoco (The Disasters of War)

Francisco Goya

Whatever earthly thing is divided
Will cede its gain, arrive and then be lost.

It is September, and I lunch in rain.
I do not like your city. I do not

Welcome the filling sky as I once could.
I notice nothing, however fatal,

In the foreground. I discard those ballads
Devoted to empire and disaster.

I belong among the hanged, whose ladders
Have drawn back at last, those who slow the wind.

I belong among the source of etchings
And illumination. I too belong

Among what follows, is again ample,
Unruly, the suffering that becomes

Easier to record when it belongs
To another. I wander for restraint

And clarity. I have learned little yet,
And remember less. I miss my red cat,

Centering himself on my books to sleep.
I miss the world calculated and small.

I want nothing of boulevards, fast food,
And I have done with the toll of the free

And dispensable. I miss my music,
My twilight and unlocking, and the past,

Where she will repeat "I am still singing.
The sky is ours. Wreck yourself here and stay."

ERNEST HILBERT

At Playwrights Horizon, Doug Wright (the author of *Quills*), Jefferson Mays (an actor trained with Ann Bogart's SITI Company), and Moisés Kaufman (the director of *Gross Indecency* and *The Laramie Project*) have all collaborated on a remarkable piece of political theater called **I Am My Own Wife**. Based on the life of an actual East Berlin transvestite named Charlotte von Mahlsdorf (born Lothar Berfelde), the play and the performance are an extraordinary stroke of theatrical transformation, unquestionably one of the most mesmerizing events of recent seasons.

At first, all that appears on Derek McLane's equally transformative set is a gray wooden floor, a façade decorated with tasteless wallpaper, a table, and a wooden chest. A woman enters, wearing a nondescript black dress, orthopedic shoes, and a beaded necklace; she smiles, begins to speak, disappears, and returns toting an old RCA Victor gramophone. She then starts to deliver, in a thick German accent, a learned account of Thomas Edison and *His Master's Voice* ("the most famous trademark in the world") as she places a wax cylinder on the machine and lets it graze the record, producing tinny strains of 1920s jazz.

This woman is Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, and Wright's dialogue is drawn from a number of interviews and letters that he exchanged with her from the summer of 1992 until her death in 2002. Indeed, Wright as author soon makes an appearance on stage, as a very gay Southerner played by Jefferson Mays, who re-creates about forty characters in all—adults and children, men and women, gays and straights—not to mention such sound effects as an audiotape rewinding. The sense that the play is being written and researched at the same time that it is being performed lends a certain Pirandellian urgency to the production. And its political and historical power is provided by a trip through German history in the second half of the twentieth century, as Charlotte endures the dangers and humiliations of a transvestite under both Nazism and communism.

She and the rest of the gay community, like the European Jews, are the natural victims of both right-wing and left-wing German totalitarianism. And the play, in part, is an account of how she "navigated between the two most repressive regimes the world has ever known." But this is not just an exercise in victimology. After a childhood in which she comes under the influence of a lesbian aunt and later confronts her brutal father and possibly murders him with a rolling pin, Charlotte ends up as

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a custodian of antique furniture and gimcracks such as old gramophones, grandfather clocks, and miniature armoires, a symphony of junk beautifully performed on McClane's artfully littered set. "She doesn't run a museum," remarks the author's macho friend John Marks, "she is a museum." And before long it is clear that all of recent German history resides in this retiring figure. Brecht and Dietrich sat at her table. Most of East Berlin's homosexuals, hounded by the police, found a community in her house. And when the Berlin Wall finally falls, she is awarded the Medal of Honor by a grateful nation.

But Charlotte's past is not without stain. She was an informer for the Stasi, and was probably responsible for the imprisonment of another collector, a gay man named Alfred Kirschner. (In defense, Charlotte claims that Kirschner urged her to name him since he was doomed to be caught anyway.) Her credibility under question, threatened now by skinheads rather than by Nazis or Communists ("I have met you before," she murmurs), Charlotte ends her days "in a garden of gramophone horns." The last message Wright receives from her is a photograph of a ten-year-old boy—Charlotte as a child—flanked by two tiger cubs poised either to lick or to eat their human companion. (You can see a blowup of that photo when you leave through the lobby.)

As an acting performance, the evening is an electrifying tour de force; its direction is stagecraft of the most exemplary and seamless kind; its writing is spare, elusive, and highly literate. The author can sometimes sound a little frivolous ("Hi, I'm Doug Wright and I'm wearing lace panties"). But, like Tony Kushner, he has found a way to use his gay identity as a universal criticism of life. Wright and Feiffer are reviving our hopes for a mature political theater. ■

Cynthia Ozick

The Rule of the Bus

READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN
By Azar Nafisi
(Random House, 347 pp., $23.95)

TOWARD THE CLOSE OF *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, her troubled yet inspiriting memoir of life under the ayatollahs, Azar Nafisi recounts the course of an attempted massacre. Twenty-one writers, members of the Iranian writers' association, had been invited to attend a literary conference in Armenia. Government agents at first discouraged the trip, then appeared to relent. The long bus journey had stretched well into the night, with most of the travelers asleep in their seats, when an alert passenger all at once became aware that the driver was missing and the bus was motionless: it had been abandoned at the brink of a precipice. Someone seized the wheel and swerved the vehicle out of danger. As the dazed writers emerged, the security forces that had been posted at the site beforehand—to "discover" the unfortunate "accident"—sped forward to arrest them. A plot to dispatch an entire cohort of intellectuals had gone awry. "The next day," Nafisi writes, "the whole of Tehran had heard the news.... There were many jokes about this incident."

As it happened—not in Tehran but at home in New York, and some time before coming upon Nafisi's despairing history—I had already encountered one of these jokes, as well as two of the targeted passengers. In autumn of 1999, during an interval of thaw in the Islamic Republic's unsparing regime, a group of four Iranian writers was permitted to depart for New York. It was a private visit, closed to the press, and presided over by an Iranian exile, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at an elite American university. In response to an invitation from the Freedom-to-Write Committee of the American PEN Center, the visitors, their academic cicerone, and a pair of translators joined an attentive circle of about twenty American writers at a large round table in a small secluded room. The mood was cautious, hesitant on both sides. The Americans, conscious of their liberties in the face of writers under duress, feared giving offense by pressing too hard; and the Iranians, accustomed to wary reticence, seemed apprehensive, unsure of what unsuspected quagmires might await. But there was a prevailing good will, edged by mutual watchfulness, and the suppressed jubilation that accompanies sympathetic recognition.

Here they were, these alien messengers bearing the unfathomable scars of tyranny—yet what were they really? Familiar middle-aged scribblers in shirtsleeves, worn intellectuals marked by deepening creases. You could meet their like anywhere, splitting literary hairs and grinding out cigarette butts in coffee dregs. One had a droopy Mark Twain mustache and a humorous shoulder tweaked upward by spasms of irony. He was the first to tear down the curtain of formality that shadowed the table, and it was from him that I heard the joke—it was a kind of joke—about the bus. In Iran, he said, we don't have the Rule of Law; instead we have the Rule of the Bus, mandated to pitch a score of writers over a cliff, and good riddance to critical thinking. He had spent the last twenty years, he confided, "humbly, in the corner of the kitchen"—a refuge from the despotic storm.

At the time of this visit, the despotic storm had engulfed thirteen Iranian Jews falsely accused of spying for Israel; they were charged with the sin of "world arrogance" and threatened with execution, a public iniquity that was drawing international protest and dominating the news almost daily. Only the year before, in July 1998, another scapegoated Jew had been hanged, the most recent in a series of "anti-Zionist" persecutions. In view of the Rule of the Bus—and since hatred of "Zionists" remained a salient and enduring tenet of the ayatollahs' statecraft—it struck me as imperative not to exclude the condition of Iranian Jews in a conversation touching on human rights and free expression. The gruff and shaggy spokesman for the four, who had been introduced as "the poet of the streets," began instantly to reply in rapid Farsi. One word leaped into comprehension: *Falastin.* It was on account of the Palestinians, he explained stiffly; that was why Jews born in Isfahan were guilty. "A governmental answer," I countered, "not an answer from the corner of the kitch-

Cynthia Ozick is the author most recently of QUARREL AND QUANDARY *(Knopf).*

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en." But the kitchen finally won out: the poet of the streets, it developed, had his work banned for years, during which he earned his living writing advertising copy. He had been accused of "accepting money from Israel." He was officially a dissident. They were all dissidents; they were all secularists; they were all subject to the malevolent whims of a theocratic tyranny.

"Theocratic tyranny": this was the professor's scalding phrase. He was angry at the ayatollahs; he was angry at the fanatical influences that had corrupted a society and was punishing its intellectuals; clearly he was on the side of freedom and humanity. Yet now—startlingly, improbably—he stepped forward, bitter, strident, enraged. It was not the distant ayatollahs who were inflaming him at this hour: it was something nearer, something that was happening in this very room. The professor was white-faced. He was shouting. While an entire nation of millions is suffering under a theocratic tyranny, you, he scolded, are unfair, you are arrogant, to ask about thirteen Jews! Why do you pick out only the Jews to worry about? Why do they deserve separate mention?

Unfair? During the regime's ongoing campaign against Jews, the thirteen had been selected for maltreatment in a place where, as the professor knew, the notion of judicial fairness was *Galgenhumor.* Arrogant? Surprisingly, the professor's idiom was almost identical to that of the abusive regime's typical canard of "world arrogance," employed in the usual way. And why, the American inquired, shouldn't a demographic minority—Iranian Jews—merit the same attention as the majority of millions? Didn't the demographic minority count as part of those millions? Who was it really who was focusing too zealously on the Jews of Iran? Was it the objectionable American, or was it the Islamic Republic, with its nonsensical anti-Semitic inventions and its persistent cry of "Death to Israel"? Or was it, just then, the distinguished professor, for whom the mere mention of Jews was an irritant?

And that is how, on November 2, 1999, the mephitic vapors of Tehran seeped, all unexpectedly, into a human rights colloquy in New York. It may be noted, though, that afterward, when the meeting was done, the man with the droopy Mark Twain mustache—the same man who had joked about the Rule of the Bus—approached the chastised American, shrugged his wry shy shrug, and smiled his tired, sensible, honest smile.

II.

SINCE THEN, I HAVE OFTEN THOUGHT of the man with the droopy Mark Twain mustache, and of the clandestine heroism of the corner of the kitchen. I fancy that I have met him again in Azar Nafisi's pages, where he can be fitfully glimpsed—now forcefully, now flickeringly. Nafisi calls him "my magician." His face (perhaps he is clean-shaven?) is hidden from us; how he gets his bread is left indistinct. But his principles are plain: he has succeeded in living as a free man in a brutal society. He will not accede to becoming, as Nafisi puts it, a figment of the ayatollahs' imagination. His credo is anonymity: "I want to be forgotten; I am not a member of this club.... In fact, I don't exist." His dissent is as absolute as it is private—and only because it is acutely private can it be absolute. Yet there is always the twisted paradox of oppression: in the ayatollahs' imagination, all privacy, including the most sequestered corner of the kitchen, is transgression, and all transgression is rebellion. Hence the private individual, the invisible dissenter, is "as dangerous to the state," Nafisi concludes, "as an armed rebel."

Inspired by her magician, Nafisi herself took up arms. She and her coconspirators—seven young women—gathered secretly on Thursday mornings in Nafisi's living room, on soft couches, over tea and cream puffs. The cream puffs and cushions are misleading: this was a war room, roiling with insurrection; the young women, arriving shrouded in their long robes and head scarves, were ardent insurgents. Their maps and weapons were at the ready—*Lolita, The Great Gatsby, Daisy Miller, Pride and Prejudice.* And also *A Thousand and One Nights,* banned in Iran and available only on the black market: the dangerously subversive Scheherazade, who knows how stories can outwit ruthlessness and confer life.

That Nafisi's rebels were women is not insignificant. In the Islamic Republic, all citizens, male and female, are subject to the caprices of tyranny; but women, even as victims, are less than equal. With the ascension of Khomeini and the introduction of *sharia,* Islamic law, the age of marriage for females was reduced from eighteen to nine. Stoning became the punishment for prostitution and adultery. Women were obliged to cover themselves from head to toe; to sit in the back of the bus; to avoid bright colors in coats and scarves and shoelaces. A hint of lipstick or a wayward strand of hair was likely to draw the savage solicitude of the roving moral police. Running was forbidden; licking an ice cream cone in public was forbidden; walking with a man not one's near relation was forbidden.

In her covert seminar, Nafisi's retort to these depredations was literary generalship. Her allies were Nabokov, Fitzgerald, James, and Austen—each of whom yields a powerful refraction of internal freedom and cultural despotism, of autonomy and usurpation. "The desperate truth of Lolita's story is not the rape of a twelve-year-old by a dirty old man," Nafisi argues, "but the confiscation of one individual's life by another.... Nabokov, through his portrayal of Humbert, had exposed all solipsists who take over other people's lives." James's Daisy Miller declines to be ruled by the expectations of her conditioning; Catherine Sloper of *Washington Square* resists not merely local convention but a deep-seated drive to manipulate and subordinate her. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Nafisi points out, "there are spaces for oppositions that do not need to eliminate each other in order to exist," and it is this many-voiced disharmony—dialogue on all sides—that underlies Austen's "democratic imperative." Nafisi had come to this perception alone; but in a period of grim discouragement, reinforcement was at hand. "You used to preach to us all," her friend the magician reminded her, "that [Austen] ignored politics, not because she didn't know any better but because she didn't allow her work, her imagination, to be swallowed up by the society around her. At a time when the world was engulfed in the Napoleonic Wars, she created her own independent world, a world that you, two centuries later, in the Islamic Republic of Iran, teach as the fictional ideal of democracy. Remember all that talk of yours about how the first lesson in fighting tyranny is to ... satisfy your own conscience?"

She remembered; she did not forget. Unlike her students, born into the ayatollahs' imperium—wherein women were legally half the value of men, and "temporary marriage," a form of sanctioned philandering, was the law—Nafisi had experienced the pre-Khomeini era. Her father had been the mayor of Tehran.

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Her mother had been elected to Parliament. After the Islamic revolution, the two women who had been Cabinet ministers were sentenced to death, "for the sins of warring with God and for spreading prostitution." The first happened to be safely abroad. The second—the former principal of Nafisi's high school—was put in a sack and stoned. Denunciations, coerced confessions, the murder of political prisoners, amputations of the limbs of thieves, show trials, and an unending procession of executions were now commonplace.

The young women in Nafisi's private seminar suffered from nightmares, both in their dreams (the fear of going about unveiled) and in quotidian reality. One was allowed to attend by means of a ruse: her father believed she was translating religious texts. Another had a dictatorial husband who beat her. Still others had been jailed or subjected to humiliatingly invasive virginity tests. Everywhere in the streets slogans on posters bawled, "Death to America! Down with Imperialism and Zionism!" It was against all this that Nafisi's seven seditionists were pitted. In the conspiratorial sanctum that was Nafisi's living room, where a mirror reflected distant mountains, they threw off their somber scarves and shapeless robes and burst into an individuality of color and loosened hair. In all of Iran on a Thursday morning, it was only here that Gatsby's green light burned.

NAFISI HAD ONCE BEEN A revolutionary of a different stripe. An early marriage (it ended in divorce) took her to the University of Oklahoma, where her husband was studying engineering. When he returned to Iran, she stayed on, joining the demonstrations protesting the Vietnam war, "occupying" a university building, reading Lenin and Mao together with Melville and Poe. Oklahoma's Iranian students were radical Marxists. Nafisi went to their rallies, yelled their slogans, and speechified against American support for the Shah. Along the way she acquired a doctorate in literature: her dissertation was on the American proletarian novelists, exemplified by Mike Gold, the editor of *New Masses*, a 1930s periodical sympathetic to Bolshevism. Her career as a professor of literature began in the English department of the University of Tehran, just as the regime was starting its religious and political penetration of public institutions.

"Almost every week, sometimes every day of the week," she recalls, "there were either demonstrations or meetings, and we were drawn to these like a magnet, independently of our will." When a popular young ayatollah—a hero of the revolution—died, rivalrous Islamic factions fought over delivering the body to its grave, while an oceanic crowd frothed in a mania of mourning and chanting. Nafisi was caught up in the communal rhapsody; she had voted for Khomeini, she had willed the revolution.

And then, as revolutions do, it swallowed her up. Vigilantes and fanatics took over. The veil was imposed on women. Books were banned. Bahai burials were prohibited. The enemies of God multiplied; torture and executions multiplied. Nafisi's students were turning rigidly ideological. Characters in novels were judged by Islamic standards and condemned for "cultural aggression." Gatsby's Daisy was denounced as dissolute and decadent, and Gatsby was scorned as a swindler representing Western materialism. In a mordant parody that Nafisi plainly recognized—"be careful what

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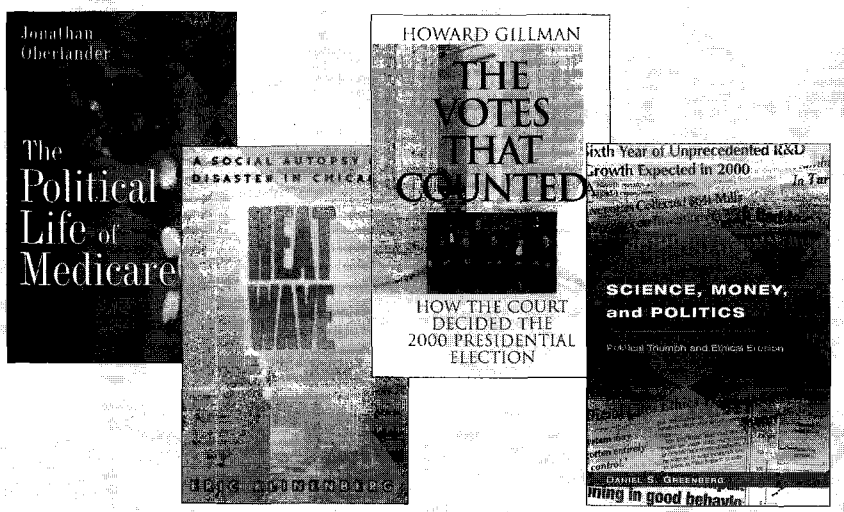

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you wish for, be careful of your dreams," she admonished one of her students, "one day they may just come true"—the ghost of the doctrinaire proletarian novel, dressed now in radical Islamic robes, rose up to haunt her: once again literature was being cut to fit prevailing dogma.

To undermine the spreading zealotry, Nafisi devised an ingenious pedagogical scheme. "This is a good time for trials," she commented dryly—and so her classroom would assume the trappings of a court: *The Great Gatsby* was to be put on trial. The novel would be the defendant. The students would enact judge, prosecutor, defense, and jury. Here was the prosecutor (a young man): "Imam Khomeini has relegated a great task to our poets and writers.... If our Imam is the shepherd who guides the flock to its pasture, then the writers are the faithful watchdogs who must lead according to the shepherd's dictates.... This book preaches illicit relations." And here was the defense (a young woman): "Our prosecutor has demonstrated his own weakness: an inability to read a novel on its own terms. All he knows is judgment, crude and simplistic exaltation of right and wrong. But is a novel good because the heroine is virtuous?" And now the defendant (in the voice of Nafisi): "A great novel heightens your senses and sensitivity to the complexities of life and of individuals, and prevents you from the self-righteousness that sees morality in fixed formulas about good and evil." *Gatsby,* the defendant insisted, is "about loss, about the perishability of dreams once they are transformed into hard reality."

At the close of the mock tribunal—a virtuoso passage in this vividly braided memoir—Nafisi appears to confront her own complicity, and that of her generation. "What we in Iran had in common with Fitzgerald," she muses, "was this dream that became our obsession and took over reality, this terrible, beautiful dream, impossible in its actualization, for which any amount of violence might be justified and forgiven." But was the dream of a politicized Islamic society, even one initially pledged to reform, ever as beautiful as it was surely terrible? When Nafisi speaks tenderly of religion, it is through her regard for her grandmother's chador, "a symbol of her sacred relationship to God.... It was a shelter, a world apart from the world." This serene image of pious withdrawal, an expression of inner devotion, is inescapably foreign to the bristling political belligerence of the chador under the ayatollahs' hard rule. In the falsified name of holiness thousands were arrested, movie houses were burned down, teenagers were sentenced to death, gun-toting morality squads prowled. With provocations on both sides, the eight-year war with Iraq was soon to be prosecuted. Tehran would be repeatedly bombed, and hundreds of young "martyrs," the keys to heaven swinging from their necks, would be sent to march through fields littered with land mines.

IN CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS THESE, Nafisi was expelled from the University of Tehran. She had refused to wear the veil; her refusal seemed to signify an end to teaching. She would not compromise, she could not be coerced. She entered the silenced zone of interiority, though not in the style of her friend the magician, whose principled disappearance she could not approximate. Occupied with family life, a husband and children, she was perforce in the world of common necessity. Was there, then, a middle way between compliance with the ayatollahs and the desolating seclusion of internal exile? A determined academic dynamo named Mrs. Rezvan claimed that there could be: she pressured Nafisi to take a position at Allameh Tabatabai, her "liberal" university, where, though the veil was mandatory in the classroom, Nafisi would be permitted to teach what she pleased—and besides, given that the veil was law, wasn't she already veiled when she walked out to the grocery store? A university is not a grocery, Nafisi objected; but she yielded. "Some thought I would be a traitor," she writes, "if I neglected the young and left them to the teachings of corrupt ideologies; others insisted I would be betraying everything I stood for if I worked for a regime responsible for ruining the lives of so many.... Both were right."

But "liberalism" in a state-controlled university was relative. The president of the faculty averted his eyes from her; religion forbade him to look at a woman. The Muslim Students Association and Islamic Jihad were active and fanatic. The walls were lined with the usual inflammatory posters. The students, constrained by beliefs and certainties that allowed no independent thought, were fearful of individuality—and it was the perplexities of individuality and autonomy that Nafisi drew from the novels which her impassioned readings illumined. Jane Austen was pelted with charges of being "vile," "decadent," "corrupt," in the regime's hackneyed terminology. Unaccountably, there was still another source for the perversion of the aims of literature:

> One day after class, Mr. Nahvi followed me to my office. He tried to tell me that Austen was not only anti-Islamic but that she was guilty of another sin: she was a colonial writer. I was surprised to hear this from the mouth of someone who until then had mainly quoted and misquoted the Koran. He told me that *Mansfield Park* was a book that condoned slavery.... What confounded me was that I was almost certain that Mr. Nahvi had not read *Mansfield Park.*

Nafisi's astonishment was dispelled much later, presumably in an American academic environment, when she was introduced to the views of Edward Said; it hardly counts as a witticism to note that she was spared this particular debasement of fiction only by the intellectual isolation imposed by life under tyranny. That a Muslim fundamentalist with a circumscribed mind had gotten wind of Said's lucubrations on *Mansfield Park* suggests something about the uses of foolish ideas.

BECAUSE THE INTENSITY OF THE Iraqi bombings had grown unendurable, Khomeini was compelled to accept what he called the "cup of poison"—the recognition of defeat and the termination of the war. Domestic loyalties now emerged as the regime's latest motif, and again there were mass executions. Nafisi's classes expanded—strangers, students from other universities, former graduates, and other outsiders crowded her lectures. They came for Nabokov, for James, for Austen; they came to hear what had been taken from them. In 1989, Khomeini died. The mammoth funeral, the turbulence of the mobs, the prolonged official lamentations ignited a public frenzy comparable (though Nafisi does not tell us this) to the orgiastic obsequies surrounding Stalin's death. The ruler who was mourned as "the breaker of idols" was placed in an air-conditioned glass case. His image, it was said, could be seen in the moon. "Even perfectly modern and educated individuals came to believe

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this," Nafisi marvels. And Mrs. Rezvan, despite her zeal for the possibility of the liberalization of at least one Iranian university, escaped to Canada. Allameh Tabatabai had been tagged by some in the Ministry of Education as no better than Switzerland—a touchstone of Western decay.

Nafisi escaped to her living room, where her surreptitious confederates, stripped of empathy in the ayatollahs' withering domain, found it in the voices of novels and in the safety of an intimate confessional space. Satire became the lance to pierce the hide of repressive law. Jane Austen, far from conspiring with imperialist subjugation, was, in this room of a thousand hurts, a rebel captain:

> "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a Muslim man, regardless of his fortune, must be in want of a nine-year-old virgin wife." So declared Yassi, in that special tone of hers, deadpan and wildly ironic, which on some occasions, and this was one of them, bordered on the burlesque.
>
> "Or is it a truth universally acknowledged," Manna shot back, "that a Muslim man must be in want not just of one but of many wives?"

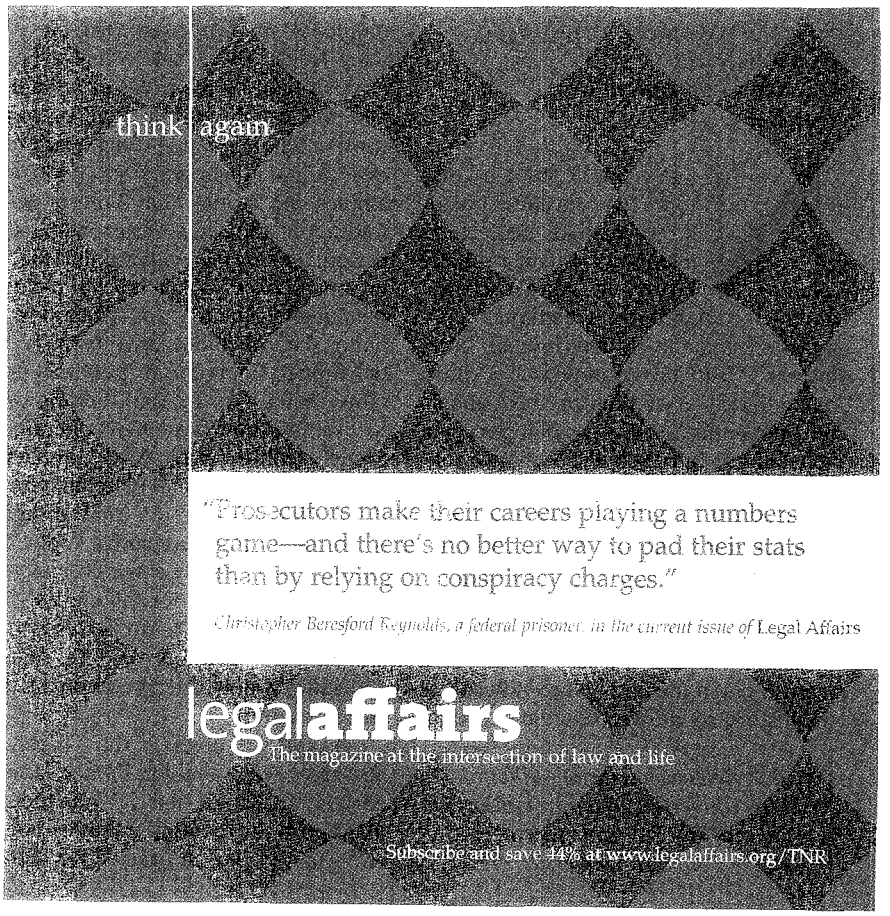
Inexorably, the personal travail of the seven began to wash over their Thursday mornings. The social condition of women in Iran—where nail polish remained an offense worthy of flogging and prison—and the outrage of authoritarian confiscation possessed the seminar: there it was in *Lolita*, here it was in Tehran.

One of Nafisi's recurrent "jokes"—not unlike the joke about the Rule of the Bus—is her account of the official censor, whose job it was to guard against insult to religion in film, theater, and television. What made him highly suitable as a judge of the visual arts was that he could not see what he condemned—he was virtually blind. The sightless censor is Nafisi's metaphor for the Islamic Republic: it declined to see, and in not seeing, it was unable to feel. This blind callousness—Nafisi rightly terms it solipsism—ruled every cranny of the nation's existence. The answer to governmental solipsism, Nafisi determined, was insubordination through clinging to what the regime could neither see nor feel: the sympathies and openness of humane art, art freed from political manipulation—the inchoate glimmerings of Fitzgerald's green light, Nabokov's "world of tenderness, brightness and beauty," James's "Feel, feel, I say—feel for all you're worth."

But the strains of insubordination and the tensions of oppositional thinking could not last. "You will be leaving us soon," her friend the magician said. She left Iran in 1997, impelled by what the great novels reveal: the right to choose. Or perhaps it was only the ayatollahs' Iran that she abandoned. She kept the Iran she prized: the mountains in her living-room mirror; the Persian classics, whose names—Rumi, Hafez, Sa'adi, Khayyam, Nezami, Ferdowsi, Attar, Beyhaghi—are an elixir of language; the memory of her underground magician, on whose repudiations civilization finally depends.

In Iran, until recently, the straits of courage through which one might pass with conscience nearly unscathed seemed few. The magician's way: I am not a member of this club. Mrs. Rezvan's way: why deprive the young of what they deserve to have and only you can give?—which led first to compromise and then to disillusionment. And last, emigration, whenever it proved feasible, and if not, then through the connivance of smugglers. The Rule of the Bus rendered any other solution unthinkable. Yet lately there are rumblings of cracks in the ayatollahs' regime. A fore-echo was heard even before Nafisi's departure, when a former student, no longer wearing the chador, confided that she had named her child Daisy: "I want my daughter to be what I never was." Once an ideologically indignant adherent of the Muslim Students Association, she had resisted Nafisi's charge that a novel is "not an exercise in censure." She had admired a professor who erased the impious word "wine" from his readings. And she had emphatically assailed James's Daisy as licentious. "As I write," Nafisi notes in her epilogue, "I open the paper to read about the student demonstrations in support of a dissident who was sentenced to death for suggesting that the clergy should not be blindly followed like monkeys."

And as I write, I open the paper to read about student protests in Tehran—the burning of tires, the burning of trees—directed against Khamenei, the current ruling ayatollah, and also against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"Prosecutors make their careers playing a numbers game—and there's no better way to pad their stats than by relying on conspiracy charges."
Christopher Beresford Reynolds, a federal prisoner, in the current issue of Legal Affairs
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President Khatami, the designated reformist figure. (When Khatami appeared on American television some months past, it was all a matter of Tweedledum and Tweedledee.) Twenty-four years ago, the students of the Islamic revolution were chanting, "Death to America!" Now their sons and daughters are chanting, "Death to Khamenei! Kill all the mullahs!" And still the tune is death. A generation has been reared on death—death as justice, death as retribution, death as religion, death as victory, death as intoxication. Revolutions are rarely velvet, and most often cannot be, especially when sanctified thugs and their truncheons come calling—but death yelps as the birth pangs of democracy?

Azar Nafisi's anguished and glorious memoir contemplates another theme. "How fragile is his life," she thinks, visiting her magician for the last time. She is with him in the corner of the kitchen, imagining the future. She will go on reading *Lolita* in the United States. He will stay behind. How much more promising it would be if the beleaguered summoners of a world yet unborn were moved to cry, "Long life to Scheherazade!" in the streets of Tehran. ■

David A. Bell
Burghers and Kings

WHEN THE KING TOOK FLIGHT
By Timothy Tackett
(Harvard University Press, 288 pp., $24.95)

THE MYTH OF THE FRENCH BOURGEOISIE: AN ESSAY ON THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY, 1750–1850
By Sarah Maza
(Harvard University Press, 272 pp., $39.95)

NARRATIVE IS BACK IN HISTORY. For decades, it suffered malign neglect as historians sought to make history a social science, embracing quantitative techniques, "cliometrics," and the shining lure of "total history." But those approaches have failed to deliver on their promise, and so the unscientific art of storytelling is again appealing to the discipline that once consisted of nothing else. But the ongoing revival is taking two very different forms. One set of historians is making new use of the narrative form itself. Others remain within an analytical mode, but see the principal subject matter of history as the stories men and women told about themselves in the past, which it becomes the historian's duty to re-create, to scrutinize, to parse, and to dissect. The two approaches might be described as narrative history and the history of narratives.

These new books by leading historians of France provide excellent examples. Timothy Tackett has composed a fine narrative about one of the most dramatic moments in European history: when King Louis XVI tried to flee a France gripped tight by the claws of revolution, and was caught in the small provincial town of Varennes and brought back to his own capital in ignominy. Sarah Maza examines the stories that French people told about the social order in the same period, seeking for evidence that the "rising bourgeoisie" of legend ever created a meaningful identity for itself. Finding none, she concludes provocatively that the French bourgeoisie itself was never more than a "myth," and then proceeds to examine how that myth operated in French culture. Both works are entertaining, thoughtful, and mercifully free of the carbuncular jargon that disfigures so much of the humanities today. But both are surprisingly conventional when it comes to their understandings of "narrative," and therefore do better at challenging the received wisdom than at providing a new interpretation of their subject matter.

Tackett's subject, the flight to Varennes, was a real-life French farce. In early 1791, King Louis XVI abandoned all hope in the revolution that had begun two years earlier, and decided to reclaim, by force if necessary, the supreme power that he had been forced to share with an elected assembly. On June 20, after several months of careful plotting, he and his family stole out of their royal palace in Paris in the dead of night. Marie Antoinette disguised herself as a Russian baronness, while the king posed as her French business agent. Traveling in a huge, slow, heavy carriage, they rumbled east toward the frontier, where loyal troops, backed by the military might of the Austrian empire, awaited them. But on the evening of June 21, as they stopped to change horses scarcely forty miles from their destination, the queen was recognized by a former dragoon, now serving as manager of the local stables. He followed them to the sleepy town of Varennes, where he raised the alarm and forced the royal family to disembark at the home of a grocer and candlemaker by the improbable name of Sauce.

By the next morning, several thousand peasants, townspeople, and national guardsmen had crushed into Varennes's narrow streets, and with escape impossible, the king agreed to return to Paris. Moderate revolutionaries, desperate to preserve the delicate constitutional arrangements that they had spent the past two years devising, pretended that he had been rescued from kidnappers. But the debacle of the flight killed the monarchy's credibility and ultimately the monarch himself. Fourteen months after Varennes, Louis was dethroned, and five months later, as thousands of Parisians looked on in fascinated awe, the new invention called the guillotine severed his head from his body in what is now the Place de la Concorde.

The story of Varennes has been told many times, and told well. The principal sources have been available in print since the early nineteenth century, and brilliant writers—Carlyle and Michelet among them—have drawn on them to brilliant effect. More recently, the story served as the basis for Ettore Scola's marvelous film *La Nuit de Varennes* (1982). Telling the story with a whimsy worthy of Diderot, Scola never showed the king and the queen at all; instead his camera followed a second carriage as it pursued the royal *berline* through the fields of eastern France. Inside, a cast of characters that included the picaresque writer Restif de la Bretonne, the revolutionary Thomas Paine, and Giacomo Casanova (Marcello Mastroianni, unforgettably)

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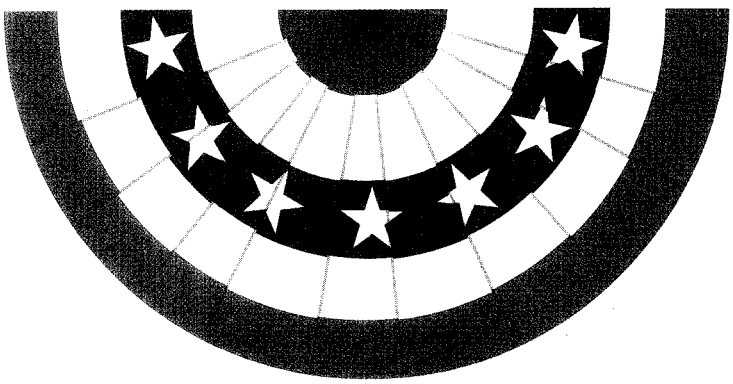

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traded philosophical, political, and erotic banter. But upon reaching Varennes, they could only stand to the side and watch the rough music of democracy in action. The scene, and the film as a whole, offered a sort of requiem for a vanished age of gentility, and the many sorts of delicate interchange that it generated.

TACKETT, UNLIKE THESE PREDECESSORS, has relatively little concern for the art of story-telling. His prose is lucid and serious, but it is utterly conventional, employing an omniscient narration and weaving predictably between story and context. He has an excellent eye for detail—for instance, the poor hairdresser whom the queen, suddenly afraid of suffering exile without the proper coiffure, dragged along at the last minute without even giving the man time to pack. And he gives a priceless description of the royal carriage as an SUV *avant la lettre:* "It came complete with leather and taffeta interior, padded seats, numerous built-in luggage compartments, picnic apparatus, bottle racks, emergency repair kit, and a leather-covered chamber pot." Like most historians working today, however, Tackett obviously thinks that, having achieved a certain degree of clarity and included a sprinkling of evocative details, his duty as a writer has come to an end.

This is a mistake. The achievement of the best new narrative historians, such as John Demos and James Goodman, is precisely to remind their readers that the recovery of the past is always an act of imagination, in which inventive prose is anything but a minor auxiliary. Like Tackett's book, Demos's *The Unredeemed Captive* tells a familiar tale, in this case the kidnapping of Massachusetts Puritans to Canada by Indians in the early eighteenth century; but Demos deliberately plays with the conventions of narrative, refusing to begin the story in any definite time and place, constantly shifting perspectives, and setting his book in counterpoint to the canonical story of Puritan minister John Williams, who eventually returned from his Canadian imprisonment and recounted his ordeal under the title "The Redeemed Captive." Demos focuses instead on Williams's helpless young daughter Eunice, who after years of captivity ended up converting to Catholicism and marrying an Indian. And if Demos makes only implicit use of cinematic techniques, Goodman's *Stories of Scottsboro* borrows openly from the cinematic classic *Rashomon.* In retelling the well-known story of black youths tried for raping two white women in 1930s Alabama, he adopts a different perspective with each short chapter, switching back and forth between the youths themselves, their accusers, their defenders (including the American Communist Party), the Klan, and so forth. Goodman adds relatively little to the known facts of the case, but he exposes the brutally twisted skeins of American racial politics in a piercingly evocative way that no analytical history can match.

The story of Varennes, too, cries out to be told from multiple, shifting perspectives: the royal family, the stable manager, the peasants, the hairdresser. Tackett does make some gestures in this direction, centering successive chapters on the king, the city of Paris, the National Assembly, and the French provinces; but the omniscient narration wins out, and it has a dulling effect. Worse, it fails to conceal Tackett's own *parti pris.* The democratic-minded American historian simply cannot generate much empathy for the master of Versailles. He accuses Louis of playing a "double game" that was "catastrophic ... for France," calls him "duplicitous," and says that he was objectively guilty of treason. Tackett thrills to the scene of humble French citizens confronting their king, as when a mere woodcutter exclaimed at Varennes: "Sire, we're not sure we can trust you." Tackett warns that this anecdote is possibly apocryphal, but by the end of the same paragraph he is treating it as fact: "Two years of Revolution had changed everything."

Surely, at this historical remove, there is little need to sit in judgment on poor Louis XVI yet again. And if we want stirring, omniscient defenses of the Revolution as the triumph of the People, we can still turn to Michelet. The important point is to understand why the king acted as he did, to get a sense of why he felt that fleeing his own capital was not simply justified but an absolute moral necessity. The narrative historian needs to show how Louis XVI and his opponents could look at the same events and see entirely different and incompatible things. A more inventive narrative style would have allowed Tackett to accomplish this task much more effectively.

Still, Tackett accomplishes a great deal. He is an extraordinary researcher who has uncovered important new material, particularly in regard to the astonishing speed with which republican sentiment spread through France in the wake of the king's flight. And he has a significant argument to make about the incident. For generations, historians have tended to see the French Revolution's descent into repression and Terror as overdetermined. The heirs of the Jacobins ascribed it to the inevitable clash between the revolutionaries and the grasping, desperate forces of reaction. The Marxists agreed, while adding the element of inevitable class conflict. More recently, liberal anti-Marxists have claimed that the political culture of the old regime begat an intolerant and inherently repressive ideology, which fatally governed the Revolution's course from the start.

Against these determinisms, Tackett upholds the claims of contingency. The flight to Varennes mattered causally, he insists. Until the fateful summer of 1791, most of the French, including most of the revolutionary leadership, had kept their faith in the king, sometimes against their own best judgment. The news of his flight came as a violent, visceral shock. It was seen as the cruelest possible betrayal, by a man whose subjects still revered him as a father figure. It replaced an atmosphere of fragile trust with one of vicious suspicion, even paranoia. And in this sense it opened the door to the Terror.

Tackett has been making similar arguments for most of his career. His first major book explored the terrible chasm that opened up when the revolutionary state attempted to take control of the Catholic Church. France's priests split down the middle, roughly half of them defying the new order. Uncovering the precise geographical pattern of defiance for the first time, Tackett showed that while it had no clear or simple origins, it foreshadowed lasting patterns of division between right and left, religious and secular. The conflict was less an effect than a cause: an example of how the Revolution literally reconfigured France's political landscape. Tackett's next book made a similar case in regard to the members of the revolutionary National Assembly of 1789. Far from beginning their political careers al-

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ready molded into lasting ideological form, he argued, they only truly turned into revolutionaries under the pressure of events, including conflict between the assembly's aristocratic and bourgeois members. *When the King Took Flight* builds on this earlier work.

If taken to an extreme, of course, the claims of contingency twist history into trivia: "For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost...." Tackett avoids this trap, but he still does too little in this book to integrate contingency with long-term change. For in the end the idea that the flight to Varennes—or even the Revolution itself—"changed everything" is a mirage that has its source in the self-serving boasts of the revolutionaries themselves. As the Jacobins liked to say, "All must be new in France; we wish to date only from today." Yet the revolutionaries did not operate on a tabula rasa; they drew on the material at hand, on a pre-existing political and cultural stock. They did radical things with it. The choices that they made mattered. But so did the nature of the stock itself.

A full history of the Revolution's descent into Terror must relate stories such as Varennes to these background elements. It must point out that the king's flight took place in a country where, in the eyes of nearly all political actors, the line between opposition and treason was already vanishingly thin. It must point out that a paranoid fear of conspiracy had reached endemic proportions well before the king's flight made clear that revolutionary paranoiacs had real enemies. It must point out that two years before Varennes, France's new leaders had soundly rejected the idea of government by checks and balances, and that as a result the tension between a sovereign king and a sovereign assembly quickly reached unbearable levels. Would the constitutional monarchy have lasted if the king had not fled? What if he had fled successfully, thereby ending the question of his sovereignty a year early? These questions are unanswerable. The challenge of narrative history is not to suggest that the fate of Europe depended on a chain of accidental events. It is to preserve a sense of suspense in the face of these events, while also revealing the structural conditions within which they transpired and which shaped the way the participants understood and reacted to them. Tackett is better at the first of these tasks than at the second.

AFTER VARENNES, AS AFTER any momentous event, no one waited for historians to arrive on the scene to start telling the story. Within days, eyewitnesses to the flight, journalists, and politicians were obsessively writing down versions of the tale, embellishing, exaggerating, and falsifying as they saw fit. Had Sarah Maza chosen to write about the king's flight, she would likely not have composed a narrative of her own, but rather examined these early narratives, approaching them like a literary critic so as to tease out common themes, images, analogies, and motifs. Maza made her reputation in 1993 with a dazzling book called *Private Lives and Public Affairs*, which used this "history of narratives" method to analyze a series of dramatic legal causes célèbres at the end of France's old regime. Carefully reading the lawyers' briefs—which, like early modern versions of Court TV, reached large audiences—she showed how trials involving private individuals could have surprising public resonance. A family torn by strife could serve as a metaphor for a dysfunctional body politic; denunciations of a "despotic" parent could veil criticism of a king who styled himself "father of his people" but frequently seemed to act oppressively. Images of private corruption and dissolution could evoke the image of an entire society grown poisonous and sick. Such images and motifs, Maza compellingly argued, helped prepare France's elites for a Revolution that aimed not simply at political reform but at moral regeneration.

In her new book Maza applies the same approach to the hoariest topic in modern history-writing: the rise of the bourgeoisie. Scholars have by now approached it from almost every conceivable angle, and in almost every conceivable time and place. They have found the bourgeoisie rising in medieval Italy, and then found it rising again in early modern Holland and early modern England, and then again in the modern United States. And of course they have found it rising in eighteenth-century France, home of the "bourgeois revolution" par excellence. It would seem impossible to say anything new on the subject—and yet Maza manages to. Not only did the French bourgeoisie not rise, she proclaims; the French bourgeoisie never existed at all.

The argument may seem nonsensical. Wasn't "bourgeoisie" a French word in the first place? But Maza has an interesting case to make. What, she asks, does it mean to be a class? Does the word not imply a shared identity, a shared consciousness, a shared awareness of common interests? "The existence of social groups," Maza argues, "while rooted in the material world, is shaped by language and more specifically by narrative: in order for a group to claim a role as actor in society and polity, it must have a story or stories about itself, it must take direction from a tale that links memories of the past to desires for the future." These claims follow directly from the "linguistic turn" in the humanities, although Maza thankfully avoids the painful prose that has so often come along with it. For Maza, bourgeois reality cannot exist without bourgeois discourse, and by this criterion the French bourgeoisie proves a surprisingly elusive beast. Indeed, it is almost impossible to find historical examples of men and women who called themselves "bourgeois," or at least who did so with pride.

As Maza admits, the word "bourgeois" itself has a long history, predating the French Revolution by centuries. But before the Revolution, "bourgeois" did not mean "middle-class citizen" but "burgher," a citizen of a town. A rural bourgeois was an oxymoron, while a "noble bourgeois" was not. Only during the Revolution, when political radicals denounced the "bourgeoisie" as a new and dangerous aristocracy of wealth, did the word start to acquire its modern meaning of middle class, and even then it did not gain general acceptance until the early nineteenth century. It is in Balzac's *Human Comedy*, with its unforgettably grasping and narrow-visioned bourgeois anti-heroes, that the French "bourgeoisie" came into its own. Yet even then, crucially, the word "bourgeois" functioned mostly as a term of abuse: the bourgeois was always someone else. Nor did any

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other, less opprobrious term, like "middle class," fill the gap. It was not that the French people commonly identified as "bourgeois" claimed to belong to some other social class. They did not define themselves in terms of social class at all.

To modern Americans, a large percentage of whom routinely describe themselves as "middle-class," this aversion to social classification seems strange. But the French, Maza suggests, have historically seen even the acknowledgment of antagonistic social groups as dangerously destructive of the social bond. Under the old regime, in official descriptions, the kingdom was an organic whole, with its division into three "estates" following strictly functional lines. "Those who prayed" (the clergy, or first estate), "those who fought" (the nobility, or second estate), and "those who toiled" (everyone else—in practice more than 95 percent of the population) in theory cooperated seamlessly for the public good. The French Revolution swept away the estates, but not the principle of universal social cohesion. Even the most stereotypically middle-class of revolutionaries—lawyers, merchants, petty bureaucrats—refused to define themselves as anything but servants of the common good. And this pattern did not change, Maza argues, even after French observers became aware of the social classifications commonly employed across the English Channel, where the term "middle class" featured prominently in political language from the 1790s. It did not change even after early French socialists started to describe society in terms of class conflict, and French historians started writing their national past in terms of "the rise of the bourgeoisie." The "bourgeois" remained someone else.

To the extent that she is simply demonstrating the absence of a triumphant "bourgeois discourse," Maza can do little more than sweep up the rubble where the scholarly wrecking balls have passed before her. It has been more than forty years since British and American historians started to call into question the long-standing *marxisant* interpretation of the French Revolution, according to which a self-confident and self-aware bourgeoisie seized power in 1789 from a decadent feudal aristocracy. It has been almost as long since the same scholars, working on more conventional social and economic themes, cast doubt on the existence of a discrete bourgeois class in the eighteenth century, although the dread word has continued to appear more freely in accounts of Balzac's France. Well before *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie,* the bourgeoisie of legend had precious few defenders left.

Far more original, and important, is Maza's exploration of the myth itself. If the many stories told about the bourgeoisie did not contribute to the construction of a bourgeois identity, they served something of the opposite purpose: they gave the French an anti-hero, a figure to define themselves against. Maza has gone through an impressive range of treatises, histories, novels, and plays, and she has found a clear pattern. From the mid–eighteenth century to the mid–nineteenth century, the French bourgeois stood as the great symbol of self-interest and the private sphere. The bourgeois was seen to care about profit, accumulation, and family life, at the expense of the public interest. The only systematically favorable use of the adjective "bourgeois" came, significantly, in relationship to the home: "bourgeois cuisine," "bourgeois household," or "bourgeois drama"—referring to the melodramatic eighteenth-century plays about domestic morality. But outside the home the bourgeois was universally reviled.

In the final analysis, the "bourgeois" was the dark opposite of the public-minded "citizen," and Maza keenly invokes the distinction between the two terms developed by Hegel, to describe the contradictory sides of the modern individual. In a thought-provoking conclusion, she extends the analysis up to modern times, and shows how much the figure of the bourgeois had in common with two other figures who have consistently symbolized grasping self-interest to the French: the Jew and, more recently, the American.

By showing so well how the myth of the bourgeois functioned in French society, Maza's book joins an impressive canon of works in the new "history of narratives." It can be profitably read alongside classics such as Natalie Zemon Davis's *Fiction in the Archives,* which delved into the stories told by accused murderers seeking royal pardons in Renaissance France, and Judith Walkowitz's *City of Dreadful Delight,* which teased meanings out of the "narratives of sexual danger" produced in Britain at the time of Jack the Ripper. Like these works, Maza's book enables the reader to see how French people—at least literate ones—understood the world around them and sought to order it. She helps us to understand what made France tick. But, like these works, Maza's book also poses difficult questions about the relationship between her narratives and what used to be called, without benefit of ironic quotation marks, historical reality. Was the French bourgeoisie really nothing more than a myth? Must we study it only as a series of disembodied stories? Can we find no tangible relation between narrative representations of the "bourgeoisie" and the real men and women who undoubtedly served as models for Père Goriot, or Célestin Crevel of *La Cousine Bette*?

There is a good reason to be suspicious of Maza's central claim that "for a group to claim a role as actor in society and polity, it must have a story or stories about itself." The reason is that this line reflects with uncanny precision the central preoccupation of Maza's own closely defined social group: American professional historians. Since the 1970s, this group's most creative energies have gone precisely toward providing various constituencies—women, the working class, gays, African Americans, and other groups—with identity-affirming stories of their own. Maza's excellent first book, a study of the heavily female profession of domestic service in eighteenth-century France, grew at least partly out of a desire to restore to French women a neglected part of their history.

The "linguistic turn" itself, in the American context, has been tightly bound up with these identity politics, and with the growing, salutary recognition that however urgent the political impulse, historians cannot simply project contemporary forms of consciousness back onto historical figures who thought in very different terms. Thus John Boswell's erudite book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980), which beautifully evoked the contours of homosexual experience from the time of Christ to the Middle Ages, was soon attacked by self-proclaimed "queer" historians because it assumed a timeless, transcendent category of "homosexual." And there was the move from "women's history" to "gender history," and to gender as a category of historical analysis. Maza's own switch to this new mode, in her book on the causes célèbres and their gender politics, exemplifies the general shift within the profession.

But do social groups need to talk ex-

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plicitly about themselves to be aware of themselves? Can an identity dare not speak its name, or must it never shut up? Arguably, Maza's model holds for such groupings as nation-states, which generally seem to require a heavy apparatus of history, myth, and legend. (Long before the era of identity politics, history-writing developed into an organized profession in part to supply developing nations with usable histories.) It may also hold true for ethnic and racial groups, which have obvious similarities to nations. But social class is a very different sort of subject. Maza justly pours scorn on the vulgar Marxist idea that the bourgeoisie deliberately concealed its true interests behind a universalist "mask": "why should the bourgeoisie, if it existed, refuse to name itself?" But she herself views "class consciousness" through a very narrow prism.

As decades of social-scientific research has confirmed, men and women everywhere rely on a very large body of verbal and non-verbal clues to deduce the social position of others. In England, accent long reigned supreme in this respect. In the Ivy League, until the 1960s, prep-school boys could tell the public-school boys by the way they put their hands in their pockets (sweeping their jackets back, without tucking flaps between hands and waist). When I went to live with a—yes—French bourgeois family in the 1980s, the mother, in the kindest possible way, identified a long series of unbourgeois faux pas that I had a tendency to commit, including switching knife and fork, using my knife to cut lettuce (*jamais!*), keeping my hands under the dining table, and so on. Her own mother was known to remark that certain people came from "good families" and others did not. When one of her daughters brought a young man to the house, the phrase "his father went to the École Polytechnique" had a noticeably thawing effect on the atmosphere.

The point here is not that class relationships exist outside language altogether, as naked manifestations of objective economic reality. The point is that the language of social distinction takes many forms, of which the identity-affirming narrative is but one. And if we start to look for these other forms of language, a self-conscious "French bourgeoisie" may come suddenly into focus. Maza herself gives a strong hint of how to proceed when she comments that if the French Revolution did not see the rise of the "bourgeoisie," it certainly saw the rise of civil servants—"the social group that ... was invested with the greatest social recognition." She argues that the civil servant, the very incarnation of the public-spirited citizen, was the bourgeois's photo-negative—but in doing so she takes for granted that the sharp theoretical distinctions made at the time between public and private, common interest and self-interest, male and female, actually ordered French social experience. This was not the case. In theory, the selection of civil servants was a strictly public, meritocratic process: in the words of the revolutionary François-Antoine Boissy d'Anglas, "We must be governed by the best; the best are those who are best educated and most interested in the maintenance of the laws." In practice, however, access to education was mostly limited to the well-off. Maza knows this, but she does not recognize that a definable group of privileged French people also knew it, took it for granted, and justified it on a daily basis.

To serve the state in a high position stood as the ultimate goal of social mobility for a large swath of the French population by the early nineteenth century. Think of all the rebellious young men in nineteenth-century novels pushed toward law school by their boringly conventional parents. (In France, most holders of law degrees pursued administrative careers, not legal ones.) To rise to this position required education, and then the passing of a long series of competitive exams, just as it does in France today. But the required education was of a peculiar sort. Particularly before university, it was notoriously short on anything like technical skills, and long on what we would call "cultivation"—an ability to think and to write clearly, a familiarity with the classics and French culture, and that nebulous quality called "good taste." And, crucially, it was believed that in most cases true cultivation could not be acquired in schools alone, but depended on general upbringing, which meant the family, the realm of private life—in short, the place where "bourgeois" qualities were freely celebrated. Within the realm of daily social experience, therefore, the figures of the "bourgeois" and the "citizen" did not function as opposites, but as complements. A self-aware swath of well-off French people—call them a "bourgeoisie"—understood that they were the social group best fitted to run the country. They were not a class in the Marxist sense, tied to a mode of economic production; but they did exist.

What all this suggests is that Sarah Maza's history of narratives actually suffers from much the same weakness as Timothy Tackett's narrative history. Both are smart, accomplished, and enjoyable books; but both lack a sufficiently loose, experimental sense of narrative itself. Contemporary narrative historians do best when they avoid the direct, omniscient storytelling beloved of nineteenth-century novelists and historians alike. In the same spirit, contemporary historians of narrative would do well to look for the widest possible range of "stories" rather than limiting themselves to the identity-affirming sort with which they are most familiar. For stories are not found just in works explicitly labeled fiction or history, and they are not always explicitly, or even implicitly, about identity. As the best novelists and poets have always known, they lurk in all sorts of strange recesses of daily experience. A glance, a gesture, a pause, a sigh—these, like a picture, can be worth thousands of words. ■

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Bad Trip

IT'S NOT NORMAL TO SEE TEN-year-old children walking around with thick wads of money in their hands. But, then, nothing is normal in Zimbabwe anymore. My son, Richie, and his sixth-grade classmates were heading off for a five-day camping trip and had been told to bring along pocket money to buy snacks at stops along their four-hour journey into Zimbabwe's rugged mountains. It wasn't easy to decide how much money to give a ten-year-old for a soft drink, potato chips, and a couple of bars of chocolate. Inflation is currently running at 301 percent in Zimbabwe, and the price of everything goes up every second or third day. The cost of the five-day hike had increased by Z$7500 (U.S. $9.00) in the two weeks between when my son's class announced the trip and when I paid for the adventure.

WE SAT ON THE LIVING-ROOM CARPET practicing how to roll Richie's sleeping bag so tight it would be small and easy for him to carry, then moved on to packing his bag. I know he's old enough to pack his own bag, but I wanted to make sure he had sensible clothes and, also, that he didn't have anything red. There is, you see, currently a ban on red clothes, since this is a color associated with the opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change. In the last fortnight, dozens of people in our town—Marondera, 40 miles southeast of the capital, Harare—and other towns have been beaten by supporters of President Robert Mugabe's government for wearing red clothes. Recently, workers at a local butcher shop who wore red aprons were pulled out by pro-government youths, ordered to remove their red, and then slapped, kicked, and warned not to wear the color again. Someone called the police, who said they could do nothing since the incident was "political." This one ugly little word dominates every aspect of our lives here now: Using politics as an excuse, for more than three years, Zimbabwe's police have turned a blind eye to rape, torture, arson, and hundreds of murders.

WITH THE PACKING ALMOST COMPLETE, I made sure my son had written his name and telephone number on every item, and then I jotted down numbers of friends on little cards. I slipped these into his shower bag, first-aid kit, and lunch box—just in case he or I got caught up in something that could be described as "political" in the days ahead. It's a terrible way to live, but we are now used to it, having experienced the terror of "politics" firsthand many times since February 2000, when President Mugabe lost a referendum and, desperate to win back public support, sanctioned the invasion of 95 percent of the country's commercial farms, many of which were owned by whites. Unfortunately, most of the farms—including the one my family had owned since I was little—were not given to peasants but rather to Mugabe cronies. Government supporters seized our farm in October 2000; people who had worked for us were tortured; and we were forced into hiding when I wrote a book, *African Tears: The Zimbabwe Land Invasions*, released in South Africa, about our experience. (I had previously written three children's books on the side; having lost our farm, I have continued to try and make a living as a writer.) At one point, we even began keeping buckets of water in every room of the house, since we had been threatened with having our home firebombed.

THE LAST THINGS TO DO BEFORE THE camping trip began were to arrange Richie's lunch and settle on the pocket money. Even this wasn't normal because bread is largely unavailable, margarine has been off our shelves for weeks, and we've resorted to paying astronomical prices for imported alternatives. Who would have ever thought that in Zimbabwe, until recently the breadbasket of Africa, bread and butter would be luxuries? But now they are. I tucked three preciously saved little chocolate bars into Richie's lunch box. Thankfully, I had been hoarding the now completely unavailable Z$500 notes, which Zimbabwe's banks ran out of a month ago, and I folded a few of these in as well. As I did so, I smiled, remembering the recent TV coverage of the bail application granted to opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, head of the Movement for Democratic Change. Charged for the second time with treason, Tsvangirai's bail was set at Z$10 million, but the banks could only provide $Z50 notes. It took four men, each carrying a large cardboard box, to get the money to officials at Harare's High Court.

LARGE BANK NOTES AND LITTLE chocolate bars weren't the only things I'd saved up for my son's trip. Zimbabwe has had no gas for almost two months. Aside from buying fuel on the black market for five times the normal price, I have resorted to accompanying my son to school on a bicycle and saving the precious quarter-tank left in my car for bulky grocery shopping and special occasions. Arriving at school to catch the bus for the trip, we were greeted by children who know us not so much from school gatherings but from our daily meetings as we pass on our bicycles on the way to school. Some of Richie's classmates had not been as lucky as I in finding the larger-denomination bank notes: They were carrying big bundles of Z$20 and Z$50 notes tied up with elastic bands into neat but bulky bricks.

I'M SURE EVERY PARENT WORRIES WHEN their child goes away. But, here in Zimbabwe, I'm not sure if I'm more worried about my son falling off the side of a mountain or about his instructors suddenly being accused of supporting the opposition political party. Teachers are now pulled out of classrooms, people are arrested at roadblocks, and grown men wearing red shirts are beaten. Frankly, I can't wait until my son is safely home, because even little boys can get caught up in the mindless horror of "politics" here. Thirteen days before President George W. Bush visited Africa, Secretary of State Colin Powell posed the question in *The New York Times* that is on our lips every minute of every day here: "In the long run, President Mugabe and his minions will lose, dragging their soiled record behind them into obscurity. But how long will it take?" We hope and pray that President Bush will ask African leaders exactly this question during his tour. **CATHY BUCKLE**

Cathy Buckle is an author in Zimbabwe, where she was born.

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A Rare Opportunity for Postal Reform

Rick Geddes is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and is an assistant professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University.

The commission President Bush established to analyze the workings of the U.S. Postal Service will issue its recommendations for reform on July 31. This is the first such presidential commission since the Johnson administration, and it is long overdue. The need for reform is critical because the Postal Service's revenue base is eroding rapidly; the institution is a train wreck waiting to happen.

Last year, for the first time in recent history, the volume of first-class mail—which constitutes more than 57 percent of the Postal Service's revenue—actually declined. Standard mail dropped even more precipitously. Not surprisingly, the Postal Service's financial condition has suffered. Its net loss in 2002 was $700 million, on top of a $1.7 billion loss in 2001.

The Postal Service needs to undergo a major restructuring. If such restructuring is not implemented, the system will become more dysfunctional and more difficult to overhaul in the future. The president's commission enjoys the rare opportunity to save the Postal Service before it implodes.

Increasing rates will not solve the problem but rather encourage the use of substitutes for mail, such as e-mail, phones, and faxes. Nor is enhanced commercial freedom for the Postal Service a viable alternative, as such freedom would only encourage it to push its monopoly power, tax-exempt status, and other government-granted privileges into competitive markets, thus unfairly competing with private rivals.

More fundamental change is needed. Fortunately, many countries have undertaken postal reform, providing valuable guidance for the United States. Those initiatives suggest that three key changes are required for successful reform: (1)limitations on or elimination of the postal monopoly, (2)full-scale privatization, or (3)both.

Many countries have limited or eliminated their postal monopolies, creating substantial benefits for consumers and simultaneously improving the performance of their postal services. New Zealand, for example, eliminated its postal monopoly in 1998, allowing full competition for letter delivery. As a result, New Zealand Post has *reduced* its basic stamp price and maintained profitability. Australia limited its letter delivery monopoly in 1989. Its basic postage rate has remained the same for more than eight years. Australia Post has earned profits for more than a decade, and on-time delivery has increased.

The main argument against repealing the postal monopoly is that service to rural customers will somehow suffer, but neither New Zealand nor Australia has experienced problems with rural delivery. Numerous other countries have limited their postal monopolies, yielding similar benefits.

Other countries have undertaken privatization. Germany's Deutsche Post has had several successful public offerings (but remains primarily government owned). The post office in Holland, TPG, is now a predominantly privately owned, publicly traded company. The effects in both countries have been positive. Because there is an explicit group to which they are accountable, both companies are more innovative, competing aggressively for business and offering their customers new products and services.

No entity would benefit more from repeal of its monopoly than the U.S. Postal Service itself. Combined with government ownership, its monopoly status eliminates its incentive to improve its service and opens it up to political interference. Unless its structure is changed, it is unlikely that the Postal Service will evolve on its own. The president's commission has the opportunity to make that happen.

—Rick Geddes

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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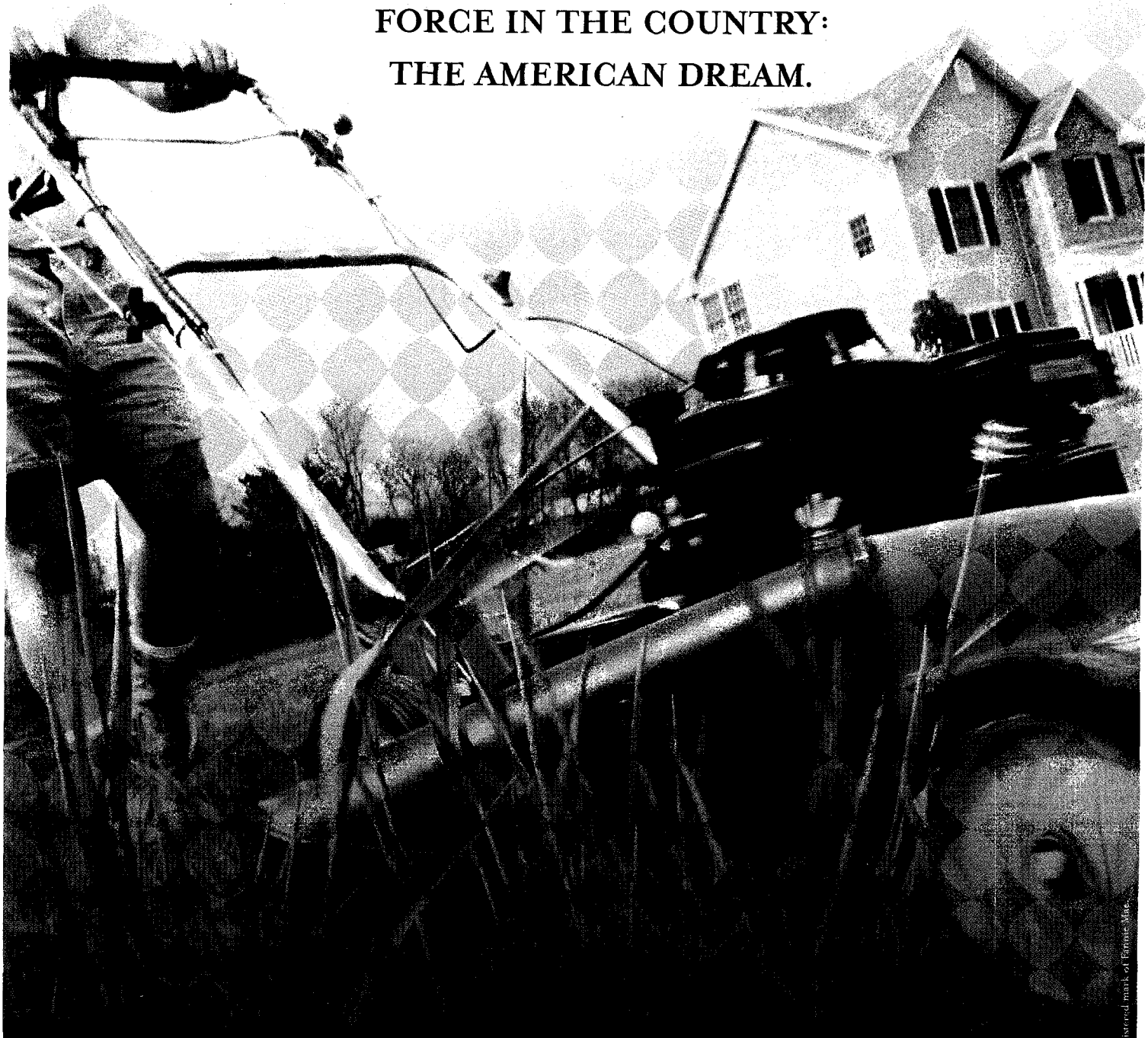

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